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*(Continuation: see **Forward** 1974-1984 next)*

labor Challenge #2 (Feb. 1970)

Repeal abortion laws now! -women's caucus

By Mary Robson

The hospital committee (all men) sits at the front, pious and self-important. It is their function to decide whether a request for an abortion will be granted.

A pregnant teeny bopper approaches them. She is handed a reply, "It'll make a woman out of you."

A pregnant mother of five appeals to them for an abortion. She is first tangled in red tape, then is handed the verdict, "Too late."

A young woman announcing "I got rhythm" is given a flat NO, but after she dies from an attempt to abort herself, the hospital committee fulfils its medical responsibility by pronouncing her dead.

Finally another young woman comes up. "Raped?" she pleads. "NO" the committee answers.

She tries again. "German Measles?" "No" the committee answers. She shrugs, throws an ocelot coat across her shoulders, puts a silver spoon in her mouth, and tries once more. "Money?" "Yes! Yes! Yes!" The committee's decision is unanimous.

This skit led off a Vancouver Women's Caucus demonstration against the present abortion laws in Canada. The march, appropriately held on Valentine's Day, was militant and spirited. Three hundred women and men carried banners which demanded the right to abortion, the right to safe birth control, and an end to the 12,000 deaths caused every year in North America by illegal abortions.

The demonstration was followed by an evening meeting on abortion which was attended by about 150.

Mary Borsky, speaking for the Vancouver Women's Caucus, pointed out that the real significance of this demonstration can only be understood in the context of the rapidly growing movement of women and men across the continent who are beginning to actively oppose our governments' inhumane laws against women. For example, the Victoria Labor Council recently came out unanimously in favor of having abortion removed from the criminal code, and 350 women in New York are presently carrying a suit against the State of New York on the grounds that its abortion laws are unconstitutional.

This spring, the Vancouver Women's Caucus is sending a car cavalcade across Canada to protest the government's abortion laws. On Mother's Day it will be arriving in Ottawa to confront Trudeau and his ministers.

Women in Vancouver, across the country and across North America are beginning to demand the basic human right of control of their own bodies. To have a law which allows the rich, and occasionally the lucky, the right to a safe medical abortion is not good enough. Women want access to free, safe abortions on demand, with no questions asked. It is not correct to say that abortion must be legalized. There are no laws restricting a person's right to a tonsilectomy, and there must be no laws restricting a woman's right to an abortion.

We demand that abortion laws be **repealed now!**

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15 cents
Vol. 1, No. 6
April 20, 1970

March on Ottawa demands women's right to abortion

ON TO OTTAWA!

by Joan Newbigging

Women's liberation groups and other organizations across the country are working on the first major Canada-wide women's liberation campaign.

The campaign, to demand the immediate repeal of the laws restricting abortion, has been launched by the Vancouver Women's Caucus. It will feature an Abortion Caravan - a cavalcade of cars scheduled to leave Vancouver on April 28, visit major cities across the country and arrive in Ottawa on May 9, the eve of Mother's Day, for a mass demonstration which will coincide with other actions across Canada.

In addition to the demand for the immediate repeal of the abortion laws, the Toronto committee is calling for free abortions on demand. This second demand underlines how repeal of the abortion laws alone is not enough - the government must provide the facilities and trained personnel to ensure that all women who want abortions have access to them free of charge.

Canada's abortion laws are a constant source of suffering and misery to thousands of women. These laws, which were reformed last year to allow abortions if, in the opinion of a specially constituted abortion committee, the mother's life or health were endangered, make abortion a criminal offense. The reforms have done little, if anything to improve the situation.

The state still abrogates to itself the right to decide whether or not women will bear children, and forces women to go through numerous humiliations and great expense in order to try and obtain legal abortions. As a result hundreds of thousands of women are forced to resort to backroom abortionists. Approximately 2,000 Canadian women are killed every year by botched up abortions, about 20,000 receive severe internal injuries at the hands of quack abortionists, and hundreds of thousands of unwanted children are born annually.

The shocking scandal of this legislation, which condones the mass murder and maiming of thousand of women, and which hits at almost every household (one out of

See page 2

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labor Challenge #6 (1970) p.2

...cavalcade defends right to abortions

Continued from page 1

four women in North America have an abortion sometime during their lives), makes this an issue which affects everyone.

In the United States, growing pressure from the women's liberation movement has resulted in some sweeping changes in abortion laws in several states. New York has just legalized abortions performed by a doctor. Hawaii has legalized all abortions but for certain restrictions including a 90-day residency requirement. Thirteen state legislatures are presently considering bills similar to Hawaii's.

These much-needed changes take place against a background of militant demonstrations and lawsuits which pose the basic constitutional right of women to decide for themselves whether or not to have children. In New York, for example, a broad coalition of groups calling itself People to Abolish the Abortion Laws organized a demonstration of 3,000 on March 28 under the central slogan of Free Abortions on Demand.

The legal concessions being granted by U.S. legislators — themselves no friends of women's rights — are still a far cry from what's needed. While some states now recognize the legal right of women to decide for themselves whether or not to have an abortion, many women are still excluded from obtaining abortions because of the expense involved, the conservatism of the medical profession, and the lack of facilities. Nevertheless these laws are an important step towards the goal of free abortions for all women who desire them.

These developments give a clearer perspective and an added impetus to the cross-Canada anti-abortion law campaign. The changes in U.S. abortion legislation provide us with a powerful lever which we can use to advance our own demands. If this victory can be won in the States, why not in Canada?

This victory underlines the importance of building a broad movement to protest Canada's abortion laws and makes the abortion campaign all the more timely. It gives us added opportunities to mobilize support for the campaign, to put increased pressure on the Trudeau administration to meet our call for free abortions on demand. It demonstrates concretely the potential power of women when we unite in common action and thereby holds an important lesson for the women's liberation movement.

It is through struggles of this type, for our basic human rights, that many women will come to understand not only the deep social and economic oppression they suffer, but also the power we have when we unite together in struggle.

The burden of unplanned, unwanted pregnancies has been a key factor in perpetuating the exploitation of women, in discouraging and preventing them from realizing their full potential as human beings.

We demand the Trudeau government end its mass murder and maiming of Canadian women! For the immediate repeal of the abortion laws! Free abortions on demand!

advertisement

Contact socialists in your area

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The League for Socialist Action and Young Socialists, 334 Queen St., Toronto 2B, Ont.

labor Challenge #8 (May 1970) p. 1

End backstreet butchery, angry women demand

March for right to abortion

by Jacquie Henderson
and Joan Campana

For the first time in history, the House of Commons was adjourned abruptly May 11 in the middle of its proceedings. The adjournment was the government's only reply to the organized intervention of women in the galleries demanding the government act immediately to provide free abortions on demand to all Canadian women.

The action in the house culminated three days of demonstrations involving over 600 women in Ottawa and hundreds more in local demonstrations held across the country.

The Ottawa action, the largest demonstration held by and for women ever to be staged in Canada, united women's liberation supporters from across Canada. Busloads of women and some men supporters from Montreal and Toronto joined carloads of women from Halifax, Kingston, London and other centers. The abortion caravan carrying the symbolic coffins for those women who have died from illegal abortions brought women from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The women came to demand that the government eliminate section 237 of the Criminal Code, which makes it a crime to seek or perform an abortion, and grant immediately free abortion to all Canadian women upon request.

A brief addressed to the Trudeau cabinet, noted that each year about 2,000 women die and as many as 40,000 enter hospitals injured or maimed as a result of illegal abortions.

Despite recent "reforms," all but the richest women are forced to endanger their lives, when abortion could be performed in a safe, simple operation in a hospital.

Saturday morning, the women marched through Ottawa streets chanting "Free abortion on demand," "Free abortion is our right," and "Every child a wanted child, every mother a willing mother." As they marched, they urged observers to join them. Some did.

After a rally on Parliament Hill, they crowded into the Railway Committee Room to present the brief. Among the speakers were Doris Power of the Just Society group, herself eight months pregnant, who told how she had tried in vain to get a legal abortion under the present laws. Dr. Henry Morgentaler of Montreal said that only one out of 1,000 women who want legal abortions is granted it under the law. New Democratic Party MP Grace MacInnis expressed solidarity with the group and said the party would continue to fight on the abortion issue.

But no representative of the government showed up, despite invitations to every Liberal MP as well as the prime minister, Health Minister Munro and Justice Minister Turner. So the women marched to Trudeau's official residence to present their demands. A coffin was placed on his doorstep, topped with the tools of illegal abortion, the tools of death, to emphasize Trudeau's complicity in the murder of

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photo by White

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A section of the march for free abortion on demand. photo by White

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Canadian women.

But the PM left for Hawaii without meeting the women. Munro left for a conference in Vienna where he was met by 50 women urging him to go home to meet his responsibility. As for Turner, he refused to meet the women, ridiculing them in a press interview.

So the women took parliamentary democracy seriously and about 30 entered the House of Commons, while 60 others filed slowly around the eternal flame outside, wearing black kerchiefs of mourning and carrying a coffin.

NDP MP Andrew Brewin asked if the government intended to find remedies for the large number of "back-alley abortions." Turner replied callously that the government was "reviewing statistics."

Towards the end of the question period, a woman stood up from the gallery and began to make a speech about the need to change the abortion laws. When the guards moved in to remove her, a woman on the other side of the house stood up and called for free abortion on demand, continuing where the first had left off. As the guards silenced her a third stood. This continued until the 30 women inside were removed and the house adjourned. The guards had difficulty removing the women because they had chained themselves to their seats, but they quickly silenced them, shoving hands over their mouths and twisting arms.

Once outside the women joined the others in a symbolic burning of section 237 of the Criminal Code.

Demonstrations were also held in Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Hamilton and other cities. The series of actions represent a big step forward for the women's liberation movement across Canada. It was a united action involving women from across the country, and encompassing many different groups including women's liberation groups and those such as the Just Society, the Humanist Society, the Young Socialists, the League for Socialist Action and the New Democratic Party. It eliminated the narrowness of some past women's liberation actions.

The struggle is only beginning. As the women stated in Ottawa — the government had better respond because we are furious. We have waited long enough for control of our own bodies.

One woman voiced the sentiments of all as she shouted, while being ejected from the House of Commons: "You may be putting us out of the gallery but you haven't seen the last of us yet. We are solid and we have the women of the country behind us."

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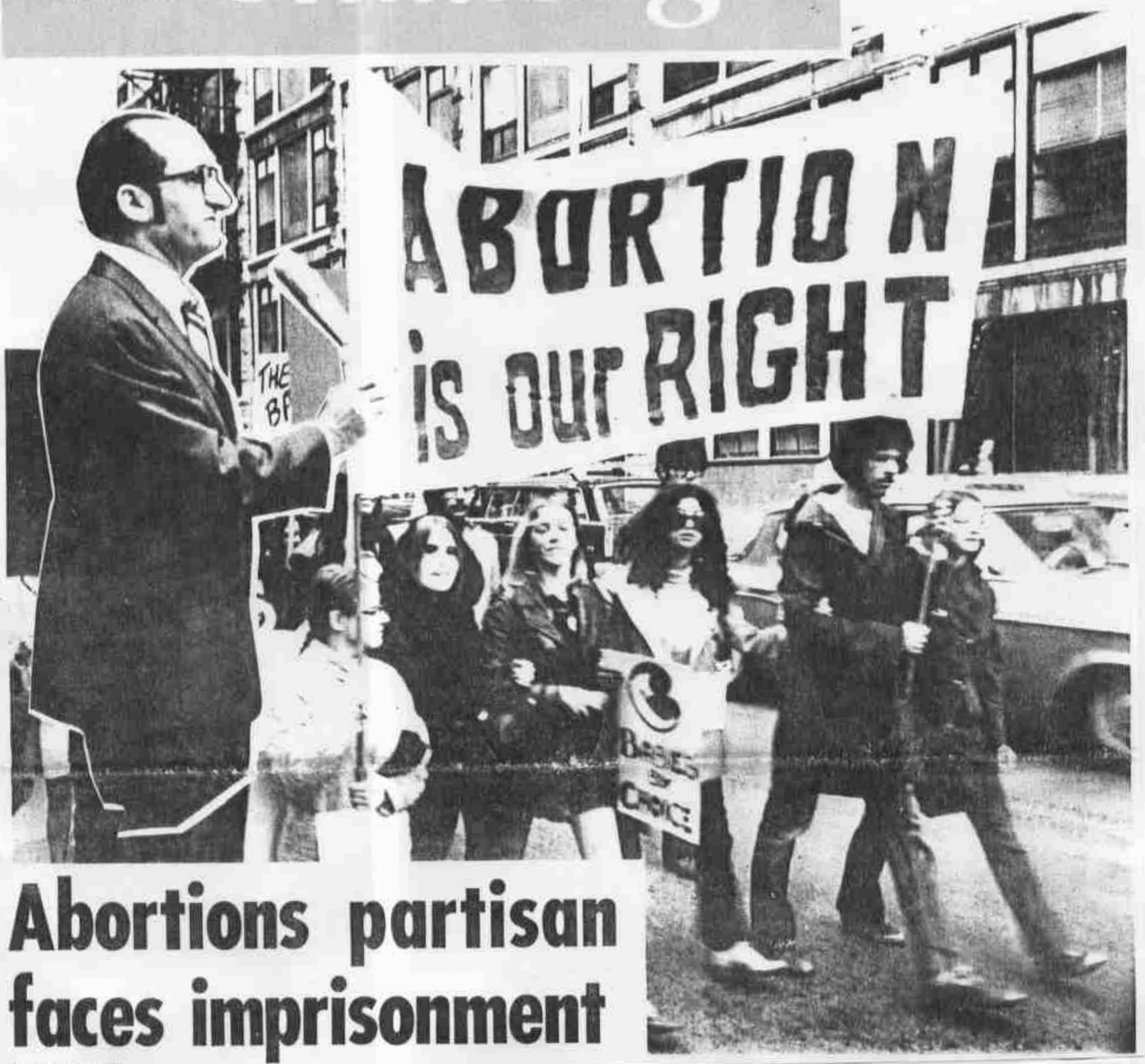

Abortions partisan faces imprisonment

by Penny Simpson

Dr. Henry Morgentaler (inset), president of the Humanist Society of Canada, faces grave criminal charges for having allegedly performed illegal abortions. Dr. Morgentaler was speaker at Ottawa demonstration this spring (above) which demanded free abortions on demand.

The arrest of Dr. Henry Morgentaler at the beginning of June in Montreal on charges of having carried out illegal abortions was a direct blow against the entire movement for women's rights. President of the Humanist Society of Canada, Dr. Morgentaler is the most outspoken advocate of legalized abortions in the Canadian medical profession. His arrest is a cynical attack that must not go unanswered, because it spells death for thousands of women not only in Montreal, but across the country.

The consequences of the arrest, which the government could not have failed to foresee, have been frightening and murderous. Montreal, a month ago, was the safest and cheapest place in the entire country for abortions. The department of population studies at the University of Montreal says that some 200 illegal abortions a week take place in the area. None of these are being handled by qualified doctors since the June 4 arrest — all other doctors have stopped giving abortions for fear of further criminal charges.

Within two weeks, at least one woman has died of a botched abortion, according to the Montreal Star, and in one hospital alone, admissions for abortion complications have quadrupled — from a high of three per month to at least three a week. The deaths and maiming from butcher abortions are the responsibility of the federal government. It is their so-called liberalized abortion law of 1968, with its hospital review boards sitting in judgment over desperate women, that have made it even harder to get a safe abortion. The present law declares any doctor and any woman a criminal for not accepting the hospitals' sanctimonious refusals of 99% of all abortion requests.

Significantly, Dr. Morgantaler has been charged with conspiring to commit, and the performance of, an abortion, less than a month after his appearance as a featured speaker at the Abortion Caravan rally in Ottawa. He has pleaded not guilty, although he does not deny that he does abortions. The Crown has also set a dangerous precedent by charging a young woman with conspiracy to abort herself.

Dr. Morgantaler says that he was held overnight without being charged and

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roughed up by the police who raided his clinic. His files and equipment have been seized, his preliminary hearing arbitrarily closed to the public, and a postponement of proceedings refused, although his lawyer had only three days to prepare for the hearing. Petition is being made to a higher court to challenge the objectivity and conduct of the judge..

The response to the arrest has been quick and effective. In less than two days, the women's liberation movement and other supporters of legalized abortions organized a demonstration of 2-300 people outside Morgantaler's preliminary hearing. A delegation of doctors including Dr. Morgantaler, Dr. Maurice Jobin of the Association for Abortion on Demand, and Dr. Serge Mongeau, director of the Family Planning Center, went to the federal minister of justice on June 16 to demand a moratorium on abortion charges against doctors until the law can be repealed.

Montreal doctors, long silent and dismissed as Church-dominated and reactionary, have responded in other ways. A committee has been established to investigate hospital admissions records since January 1 to find out the extent of botched abortions, and they are also circulating a petition among the doctors of the province in favor of abortion law repeal.

In only two days, they obtained the signatures of 187 doctors, and published the petition as a full-page ad in the Montreal Star. It reads: "We, the undersigned medical doctors, believe that it is intolerable that women should have to die as a result of incomepetent, illegal abortions while the law does not permit doctors to help women with unwanted pregnancies. We believe that the present Canadian abortion laws are inadequate, unreasonable, and cruel. They need immediate revision. The way to prevent deaths of young women due to incompetent abortions is *abortion law repeal.*"

A spokesman for the Doctors for Abortion Law Repeal said, "Our next statement — and there will be another — will have 1,800 names." The petition has already been signed by doctors ranging from chiefs of hospital departments to interns and residents

Other responses have been significant. The Montreal Star, the largest circulation daily in the city, had a lead editorial June 16 calling for a law similar to that enacted in New York State, allowing abortion up to a fixed time limit on the decision of a woman and her doctor. One of the most popular weekly papers, Le Petit Journal, featured four different stories and an editorial on the abortion crisis in its June 21 issue. One article ended, "Mr. Trudeau declared in Vancouver a few days ago that the population is not yet ready to accept such a law (for abortion on demand). Pontificating women of 50 and older can refuse to have abortions, that's their right; but let's not be willing murderers of...all those who have committed no other crime than that of being the victims of a hypocritical society."

Montreal women's liberation groups are planning a broadly-sponsored public

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Morgentaler

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protest meeting for July 3, and are calling on women's liberation groups across the country to hold similar meetings. The response of the Montreal doctors makes it clear that there are deep divisions in the medical profession, and it should be possible to get doctors in other cities to organize a petition similar to the Montreal one, and publish it.

Among the first to defend Dr. Morgentaler after his arrest was the federal New Democratic Party, which co-sponsored a press conference June 11 in Ottawa to argue the case for removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. NDP MPs Grace McInnis and Andrew Brewin participated in the conference together with Dr. Morgentaler.

It is vitally important that a broad and effective defense campaign be organized. The utmost pressure must be put on the government to withdraw charges against Henry Morgantaler and the young woman who had the abortion, to defeat this attack against the abortion movement, to force an immediate repeal of the murderous Canadian abortion laws, and win the goal of free abortions on demand.

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Women's liberation debate

What kind of movement

by Marlie Ritchie

TORONTO — The launching of the Toronto Women's Caucus by a meeting of 25 women here on June 9 marked a major step forward for the entire women's liberation movement in Toronto.

Unlike the existing groups, the Caucus is dedicated to building a democratic, broadly based movement that can appeal to all women through education and action. The only membership requirement is that women support women's liberation and pay annual dues.

The formation of the group flowed from discussions in the Toronto women's liberation movement on its future. Three groups have existed in Toronto — the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), the New Feminists, and the NDP Women's Liberation Movement.

The NDP group has been very active with preparations for the fall Ontario NDP convention. Primarily involved with making the NDP a voice for women's liberation, the group has been very successful. However its appeal is limited to the NDP milieu.

The other two groups, the Toronto Women's Liberation Movement and the New Feminists, have not met the challenge of organizing the large numbers of women coming to the women's liberation movement.

The two biggest problems have been sectarianism in the groups, and the analysis of the enemy of women's liberation — is it men, or the system in which we live?

The latter problem was posed by the decision of the New Feminists, announced in the May issue of their publication, The New Feminist, to re-organize into "consciousness-raising" cells "to do the real work of radical feminism." In outlining what the work of the cells would be they said, "We regard our personal experience, and our feelings about that experience, as the basis for an analysis of our common situation. We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture. We question every generalization and accept none that are not confirmed by our experience."

This analysis implies two things. First, it seeks the roots of women's oppression not in the system in which we all live but rather in our own personal experiences. This leads to actions only on the personal level rather than the broad mass actions which can strike at the social roots of the oppression of women. Second, it denies the relevance of the experiences of women's liberation fighters over the last 150 years, and the valuable lessons they have learned about the nature of the enemy and how to conduct the struggle.

It is true that women's consciousness must be raised. But withdrawal from mass action, far from accelerating this process, hinders it both by limiting education to a small elite and cutting it off from the experiences of the struggle where the vital lessons are to be learned. The consciousness of women will be raised as large numbers of women become involved in the struggle, face the reality of the forces which keep us oppressed, and discuss the conclusions which flow from these experiences.

In an article in the June issue of Pedestal, publication of the Vancouver Women's Caucus, Mary Trew writes about the problem of sectarianism. The attitude prevalent in some groups, including the Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Toronto WLM and the New Feminists, is that women who do not have a pure position — either "revolutionary" or "radical feminist" — on women's liberation are to be excluded from participating in decisions and activities of the group.

The same attitude has blocked effective united action by groups of differing views. This quite evidently occurred on the otherwise highly successful abortion caravan, at its Toronto stop-over. As Trew says: "There, a broad steering committee had been set up with a number of groups participating — the WLM, the New Feminists, the NDP Women's Caucus, and the Young Socialists. The latter three groups were, in effect, excluded from decision making meetings by the Toronto WLM group with the acquiescence of some of the women on the caravan. . .Had these three groups as a result withdrawn from

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Marlie Ritchie

the abortion action, we would have mobilized considerably fewer women, drawn fewer into the struggle that was destined to radicalize every woman involved."

Throughout the development of the women's liberation movement it is essential for all groups to unite to work on the big issues of abortion, day care, equal pay, etc. No one group has a monopoly on the fight for free abortions. Every women's group has to actively participate in the struggle if the movement is going to grow.

The other kind of exclusionism which often occurs in the movement is the exclusion of members in groups from the decision-making process. It is often the practice for decisions to be based on the achievement of a "consensus" of the group. Discussions go on for hours until a consensus is reached or until any opposition is too tired to continue arguing. In such discussions it is only the most outspoken women who participate, not the women just coming into the movement. Votes are seldom taken so that there are often differences of opinion on what the consensus was.

As Trew points out, "All these factors add up to a thoroughly unhealthy decision-making process — one which, in such a large group, is extremely undemocratic." Only through thorough discussion and democratic votes can we avoid the consensus brand of elitist leadership, and arm women to explain and defend the policies of women's liberation.

The Toronto Women's Caucus is a major step by Toronto women to come to grips with these problems in the women's liberation movement. It has formed a high school fraction of the caucus and called a conference June 27 for all young women to discuss such questions as the socialization of women, women in the schools and the organizing of high school women in the women's liberation movement.

This development represents a most positive process of clarification that is taking place within the movement as it continues to expand and seeks to grapple with the tasks before it. As this develops it will become all the more important, and possible, that all sections of the movement be prepared, despite their differing analyses, to unite in action.

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labor Challenge

League for Socialist Action call

Unity in action for women's liberation

How will the women's liberation movement be built? How should this movement relate to other movements and issues? What is the relationship of the women's liberation movement to the socialist movement? Such questions are being heatedly debated within the movement today.

A document, The Socialist Strategy for Women's Liberation, adopted at the recent convention of the League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, discusses these and other issues from the revolutionary socialist viewpoint. The following are some excerpts.

* * * *

The women's liberation movement must be non-exclusionist. It must seek to involve all women who want to be part of the struggle, regardless of their politics, experiences, class backgrounds, etc. The organizational norms of the movement should be designed to allow all women to participate in its activities and decisions.

We recognize that it is important that the movement carry both actions and educational discussions. "Consciousness-raising" discussions play a vital role in enabling women to come to grips with their oppression, and mass actions, such as the abortion caravan campaign in Canada, and the August 26 actions throughout the U.S., have a decisive role to play in enabling the movement to feel and demonstrate its power and strength.

Program for mass action

We reject the concept that the women's liberation groups now developing should adopt a rounded "anti-imperialist," "revolutionary," "socialist" or "Marxist" program — a concept which serves only to limit these groups to already convinced radicals, often to limit them to one particular tendency. At the same time we oppose the concept that the women's liberation movement should become a *single issue movement* around one particular aspect of women's oppression, such as abortion.

Because the oppression of women touches on every aspect of life, this struggle quickly relates to and overlaps with other struggles. The criterion in determining whether the movement should take a stand on an issue that is not primarily a women's issue, in our view, should be whether or not that particular struggle broadens the movement and enables it to move forward in an anticapitalist direction. Women's liberationists must be won to the understanding that their struggle is an important component in the overall fight against exploitation and oppression.

The struggle against all manifestations of male chauvinism is an important task before women's liberationists. But the overall thrust of the movement must go much deeper. It is in relation to this that we put forward the basic historical materialist approach developed by Marx and Engels.

Women have not always been oppressed since time immemorial. It was the advent of class society, based on the private ownership and inheritance of the means of production, that brought about their oppression. We can refer to the period in prehistory known as the matriarchy, when women played the leading role in advancing human society, to demonstrate how the position of women is rooted in the economic and social conditions of society and not in the "timeless psychology" of man and woman.

Socialist perspective

Only through the destruction of the existing economic and social structure, only through the destruction of capitalism and the building of a socialist society, will women's liberation be realized.

This is not an academic matter. It involves the essential strategy of the movement. It determines that the strategy of the movement must be developed in an anticapitalist direction.

The demands we put forward — for complete equality at work, for a far-reaching system of government-financed nurseries and childcare centers controlled by those who use them, for free abortions on demand, etc. — are designed to give expression and direction to the inherently anti-capitalist dynamic of this struggle. They are transitional demands, which articulate women's needs, raise their consciousness and propel them forward in struggle against the system. One of the key tasks of revolutionaries in the movement is to convince other women's liberationists of the need for such a strategy and to participate with them in formulating it.

The women's liberation movement has the potential to reach out to all women, and to draw them into an anticapitalist struggle and towards the socialist solution. Demands such as that for equal pay launch them into struggle against capitalism on an economic level, while others such as the demand for a massive government-financed system of child-care, into struggle on a political level against the capitalist state. The oppression of woman is so deeply imbedded in the very foundations of the system itself, that no series of reforms, however far-reaching, can eradicate it. Thus, the struggle as it moves forward, is propelled all the more clearly against the capitalist system which benefits from and sustains the oppression of women.

One question that is heatedly debated in the movement centers around the family as an economic and social institution. A whole range of views are put forward on this issue.

We explain that the family emerged with class society as the mechanism whereby private property, the privately-owned means of production, was passed from one generation to the next. Capitalist society throws the responsibility for caring for and raising children on the nuclear family, within which this becomes women's specific task and social function.

The family bears the burden of taking care of the aged and infirm, and the education and inculcation of bourgeois values into children. Within its walls, backwardness, conservatism, and a narrow selfishness are nurtured. Intolerable economic burdens and, as a result, psychological pressures, are placed on this fundamental unit, which is then proclaimed sacred.

Future of the family

As a result the family, as we know it today, far from tying individuals together on the basis of any real human relationships, chains them to one another on the basis of economic necessity. The family is a reactionary pillar of class society whose economic foundations must be destroyed in order to free its members from its shackles and to allow truly harmonious human relationships to flourish.

It is in this context that we pose the responsibility of society as a whole to care for and educate children.

We say that women have a right to be financially independent, and we concretize that concept also in such demands as equal pay and preferential hiring of women, for a wage for homemakers, and jobs for all women through sliding scales of hours.

The League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière stands out in stark contrast to all other organizations on the left. The program and traditions of our movement, around which we are all educated, firmly uphold the full liberation of women. Women have been prominent as

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MASS ACTION POINTS WAY. March on Ottawa last May by women across Canada demanded removal of abortion from the criminal code. Canada's largest women's action to date, it gave powerful impetus to women's liberation movement across country.

leaders and activists of our movement since its inception — long before the advent of today's women's liberation movement. We date our heritage in this respect back to the days of the early Canadian Communist party, with its outstanding women leaders such as Florence Custance. Today our movement has more women in its leadership than ever before and is winning the best of the radicalizing women.

And yet it is true that more than half our membership and leadership is male. This is not because we want things this way, nor because we are insensitive on this issue. Rather it is because we are building a movement with the people and in the conditions that exist in capitalist society. We are building an instrument to destroy capitalism, not a microcosm of a future society.

The League for Socialist Action

We are building a movement which will unite within its ranks the most conscious elements of all sections of the population and will weld them into a unified combat party. Within our own ranks we consciously strive to overcome all manifestations of male chauvinism.

We are not a federation of oppressed groups, representing different and conflicting interests, but a democratic centralist movement in which all members participate in developing the program for and helping to lead a multifaceted struggle for the abolition of capitalism.

We wholeheartedly support the development of the women's liberation movement. It is a powerful indication of the deepening radicalization that is taking place in Canada. It has the potential to include half the population and is presently propelling a whole new layer of Canadian society into active struggle against capitalism. We are working in this movement with the utmost confidence and enthusiasm; we are activists and leaders in it; we are working to build it and direct it against the source of woman's oppression — class society.

The goal of this movement is not just women's liberation but the liberation of all humanity from deep sexual, psychological, social and economic oppression. We must show that this requires nothing less than socialist revolution, that women's liberationists must join in building the revolutionary instrument proven indispensible in leading this revolution. They must join the League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere.

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Canada-wide women's rally debates liberation strategy

The first Canada-wide women's liberation conference will take place in Saskatoon on November 21-22. This is an exciting development in the growth of the Canadian women's liberation movement —an opportunity for activists from across the country to meet together and discuss priorities and strategy for the movement in the coming period.

Featured speaker at the conference is Marlene Dixon from Montreal, speaking on the Political Economy of Women. The full agenda includes such topics as:

—Socialist Women: Where do our differences lie? — the debate over strategy for revolutionary women.

—Women's Liberation: social movement or social service bureau?

—A Strategy for Solidarity: the history and future of the abortion campaign.

The conference is organized by the Saskatoon Women's Liberation Movement (517 Lansdowne, Saskatoon; phone 242-5830). Registration is $2, and billeting will be provided.

'Hate yourself' is their goal

"Women have fought such growths desperately all the way through recorded history. They've pulled out the hairs, gouged out chunks of skin containing the hairs, and used ointments, medication, and incantations of every imaginable description in the process. Many of them became mental cases during the struggle. Things are different now. Investigate this newer way to gain permanent freedom from what can become a permanent worry."

This ad is not a put-on; it appeared recently in Toronto papers advertising electrolysis as a method of removing unwanted hair. It was normal to have hair all over the body, it reassured us, but it was abnormal to leave it that way.

Advertising agencies have a conscious tactic of making women feel ugly, hate their bodies, despise the shape, color, smell and texture of themselves. Only then can women be made to buy the myriad of products and treatments which will temporarily cover up their "ugliness."

Some of this advertising is particularly objectionable. The worst is the kind that takes an aspect of women's history or desire for freedom and distorts it by manipulation. An example of this is the "You've come a long way, baby" ads, telling women that they are now so emancipated that they even have a cigarette designed for them.

Such ads not only exploit women, they degrade women. They degrade women's position in history and degrade the struggle for women's liberation. Yet such ads are not infrequent. They grow out of the capitalist system itself, which has to exploit all of humanity's needs — and manipulate fears and insecurities to create new needs — to expand a crowded market.

— Lis Angus

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LSA candidates fight for right to abortion

by Kate Porter
Vancouver LSA aldermanic candidate

"But isn't abortion on demand illegal?" asked radio talk show host Ed Murphy.

"Yes it is," replied sociallst aldermanic candidate, Mary Trew. "That's why it is an important question in thls election."

"But the abortion laws are federal," persisted Murphy. "What can city council do about them?"

"These laws are unjust," Trew responded. "Those laws deny women the right to control their own bodies. No city council that claims to represent women in Vancouver can ignore that.

"City council must fight beside women to have these laws repealed. And why wait — it must establish free abortion clinics to ensure that no woman is denied access to abortion for lack of money."

Free abortion on demand is a key aspect of the League for Socialist Action aldermanic campaign in Vancouver.

Mary Trew and myself are both actlvlsts in the women's liberation movement, and we are using the election campalgn to carry women's struggle forward.

Vancouver women's activists initiated the cross-country caravan for abortion reform last spring. We stand for a civic government that will initiate and lead such campaigns. We demand that city hall defend Dr. Makaroff, sentenced by Vancouver courts to three months in jail for illegal abortions, who now faces possible deprival of his licence to practise at the hands of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

With nothing but opposition from Mayor Campbell and bis administration, women's liberationists have succeeded, through a strong campaign, in forcing a certain "liberalization" in abortion procedures in Vancouver hospitals. More therapeutic abortions are performed here than in any other hospital in Canada.

But the abortion problem is far from solved.

To get a therapeutic abortion a woman must convince a psychiatrist and get the signatures of seven doctors including the hospital therapeutic abortion board. This humiliating procedure is time-wasting and costly.

Recently women have been threatened with major abdominal surgery to scare them off and women on welfare have been forced to accept sterilization to obtain desperately needed abortions.

Fewer than one percent of women seeking abortions in this city get "therapeutics." Ninety-nine percent must seek illegal and unsafe abortions!

While prosecuting Makaroff, the government refuses to provide the facilities for abortion. Hospital beds are denied. Catholic hospitals refuse to perform abortions at all — though they eagerly accept public funds.

City hall has ample power to influence hospital policy — to make the beds and facilities available for abortions. We further call for the city to establish community polyclinics which, among other services, would provide women with birth control information and materials, pre- and post-natal care and abortion on demand — all free. Let the government prosecute if it dares!

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Debate at Saskatoon women's conference

Mass action is key for women's liberation

by Lis Angus

The National Women's Liberation Conference in Saskatoon November 21-22, bringing together over 200 women from across the country, marked a milestone in the development of the Canadian women's liberation movement.

It launched an intensive cross-Canada campaign for free abortion on demand focusing on protest actions against the government's inhuman abortion laws on February 14. At the same time it clarified the debate on the nature of the movement, its direction and priorities that had been taking place in some sectors of the movement.

The conference was dominated by this debate. Some participants attacked the very concept of attempting to build a mass action-oriented, non-exclusionist women's liberation movement.

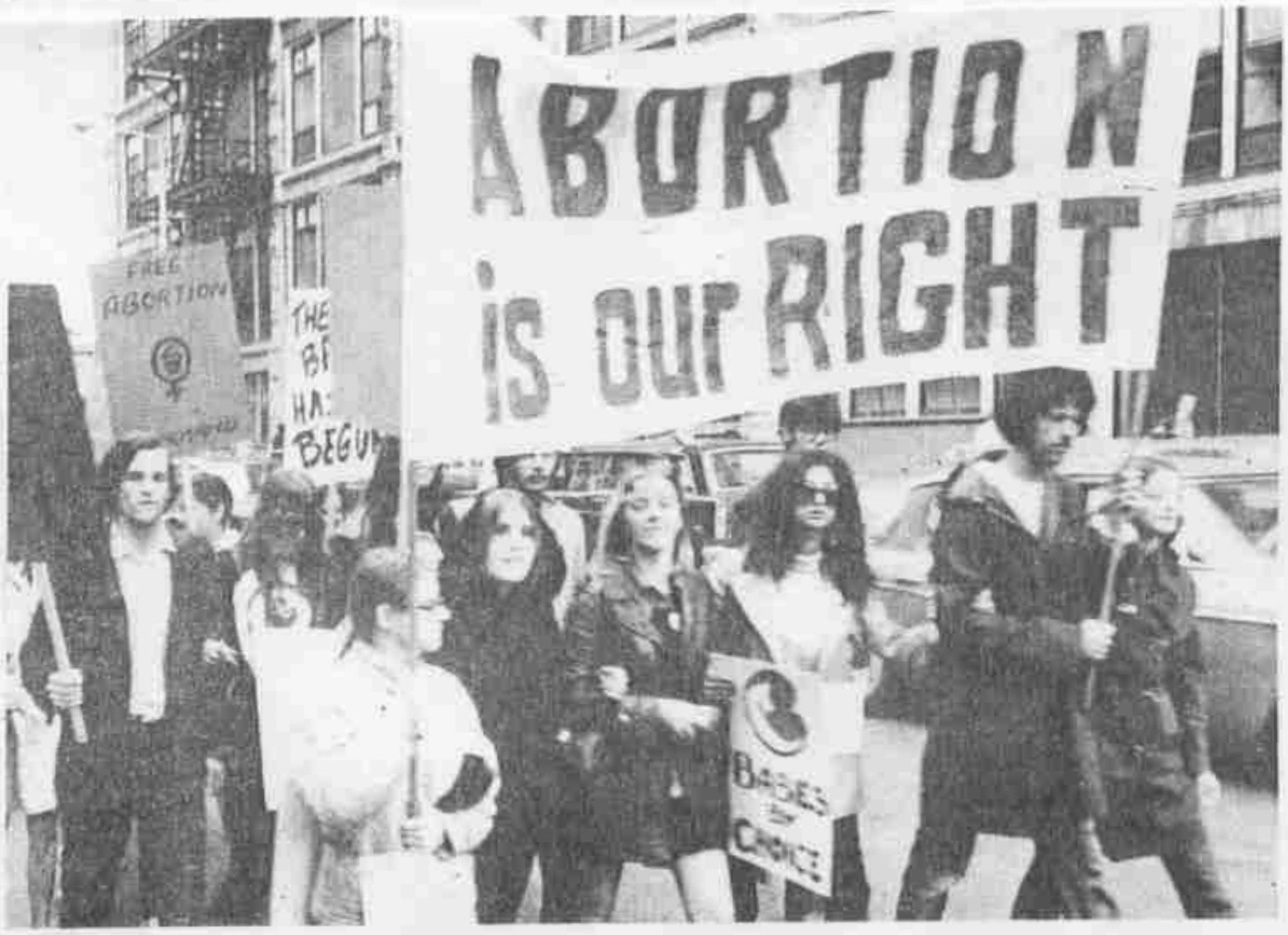
This attack was launched by Marlene Dixon, the featured speaker scheduled to open the conference with an address on "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation." She ignored her announced topic to attack the validity of the movement itself, stating that "Sisterhood is bullshit." Later she explained, "I'm leaving the movement — but I'm not leaving it alone. My purpose is to split the movement along class lines."

Peggy Morton, formerly of the Toronto Women's Liberation Movement and now in the Leila Khaled Collective, also scheduled to speak on the political economy topic, elaborated Dixon's points. She said that it is selfish for women to organize around specifically women's demands such as abortion. She said it was only revolutionary to work with the poor, that women uniting together against simply their own oppression is "liberal."

The meaning of these at first confusing attacks became clear when an action proposal was presented to the conference — the campaign for free abortion on demand. Dixon and Morton opposed this action, the only one proposed at the conference, making it clear that what they wanted was not a genuine "revolutionary women's movement" as they advocated at one point in the discussion, but a narrowed, inward-turned movement that shied away from all possibilities of becoming a revolutionary mass action.

Dixon stated that a continuation of the abortion campaign would be a disaster for the movement the same way "the August 26 demonstrations in the U.S. were a disaster." August 26 a disaster? Yes, she said, because "only 30,000 women came out on the New York demonstration!"

What's worse, she felt, the U.S. movement was starting to win concessions in their demands for free legal abortion. Thus these demands must be reformist and non-revolutionary.



FOCUS FOR MASS ACTION. Call for "free abortion on demand" at last May's demonstration in Ottawa (above), has shown power to win broad support to women's liberation movement.

Mary Trew, a Young Socialist and a member of the Vancouver Women's Alliance, was one of the many women to defend women's liberation against these attacks. She asked Morton and Dixon, "Why are you afraid to unite with women who can agree on specific demands, such as the right to free abortions on demand, and who want to fight for them?"

photo by MacInnis

DR. HENRY MORGENTALER, prominent fighter for right to abortion, now threatened with jail term, speaks to Toronto rally November 26.

"This conference poses the question of the whole future of the movement," she continued. "Are we going to retreat now, or are we going to go out to build a mass women's liberation movement to actually win the demands we have raised?"

The August 26 actions in the U.S., she pointed out, emphatically demonstrated that women can indeed unite and that the power of united sisterhood has a staggering potential. Women from all walks of life, from all classes and races, came together in mass demonstrations demanding free abortion, free 24-hour child care, equal pay and opportunity on the job, and equal opportunities in education. This action marked a decisive turning point in the growth of the movement.

Trew described the revolutionary dynamic of women's liberation as it mobilized women in struggle against the capitalist system and explained the Morton-Dixon position as "a fear of a mass movement for women's liberation and a fear of winning victories."

A number of women commented that they had only joined the movement recently and were beginning to think that

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socialism was the answer to the oppression of women. This sentiment reflects the revolutionary dynamic of women's liberation. But if the movement were to become exclusively socialist as Marlene Dixon had said it must, women like them would never get the chance to come to that consciousness through participating in the movement.

The conference itself demonstrated the truth of this argument. About a hundred women who attended the first day's session failed to return the second day. They had come to hear how to fight against their oppression as women and the abstract speeches on why they should not be concerned with their own problems simply confused them.

The opposition to mass action was led by an alliance of Jean Rands and Maggie Benston of the Vancouver Women's Caucus, with Dixon and Morton.

While Rands and Benston disagreed with Dixon-Morton's dismissal of the women's liberation movement as such, they agreed in opposition to united action around specific demands that can mobilize large numbers of women in struggle. "Women should only organize around the totality of their oppression," they said. But aside from proposing a vague "women's union" they gave no indication how this could be done.

On Sunday afternoon a workshop attended by representatives from groups across the country adopted the proposal of

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photo by Belfont

MARY TREW was a delegate to Saskatoon conference from Vancouver Women's Alliance. A League for Socialist Action candidate for alderman in Vancouver's civic election, she has made women's liberation demands a focus of her campaign.

Campaign launched to win free abortion on demand

by Jacquie Henderson

A cross-Canada campaign for free abortion on demand focusing on protest actions on February 14 was launched at the abortion workshop of the National Women's Liberation Conference held in Saskatoon November 21-22.

The February 14 date marks the first anniversary of the launching of the campaign in Vancouver. In this year gains have been made in the fight for abortion but the murder of thousands of women through botched illegal abortions still continues.

Workshop participants vowed to confront Trudeau with their demands every time he stepped out of his office. Provincial and municipal governments were also singled out for attack and will be called upon to establish abortion clinics.

The women decided an important part of the campaign would be the defense of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, theatened with a jail sentence, and Dr. David Makaroff, presently in jail for performing abortions.

As a high school student from Edmonton explained to the conference, the issue is also one that affects high school women. She called the educational system hypocritical in its attitude to sex and birth control.

"We are not supposed to be interested in birth control," she said, "because nobody gets pregnant who doesn't want a baby. Except unwed mothers. And they don't exist. It's surprising how many of my friends don't exist." High school women will be carrying campaigns for high school assemblies on birth control and abortion.

The renewed campaign comes at an important juncture in the fight for free abortion on demand. Already the struggle has forced a certain liberalization of abortion procedures in some areas. Opposition to present abortion laws has spread rapidly, embracing a range of organizations from the New Democratic party to the otherwise conservative Canadian Psychiatric Society. Even the Liberal party policy conference felt compelled to make the record against Trudeau's refusal to change the law!

While support for legal abortion grows, Canadian women still do not have control over their bodies. Thousands of women are maimed and murdered yearly by botched abortions. Millions more are emotionally maimed by the constant threat of unwanted pregnancy. The abortion issue dramatically demonstrates that all women are in the same oppressed condition. Their problems are not personal; they are oppressed as a sex. That is why this issue has the potential of involving millions. of women.

The success of the women's liberation movement in the United States in winning legalized abortions in many states, raises the real possiblity of a big victory for the Canadian movement on this question. Victories, far from "coopting the movement," as some fear, propel it forward. They show that it is possible for women to win if they unite in common action and encourage them to continue to fight around other aspects of their oppression.

And from this struggle women learn about the nature of the system that oppresses them, and the need for a new society based on human needs, not profit. The abortion struggle reveals how Canada's rulers lack any concern for the desperate needs of Canadian women. They have shown themselves no more interested in the lives and welfare of Canadian women than in the lives of the Vietnamese. Trudeau's hypocritical support of existing abortion laws has come to symbolize for many all that is rotten and sexist in this society.

In addition to the central demand of free abortion on demand, the campaign will raise such demands as no forced sterilization, more research into safer contraception, and an extension of government financed medical plans so that the cost of birth control and abortion doesn't fall on the individual woman. All these demands attack the single problem that women do not have control over their bodies and the government denies us that control.

The campaign is just beginning. And we will struggle until we gain real control over our bodies and our lives.

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photo from The Militant

30,000 MARCHED IN NEW YORK. "Women's strike for equality" first revealed mass support for women's liberation in North America, launching movement as focus for broad radicalization of women. Demands for free abortion, free 24-hour child care, equal educational and job opportunities brought together tens of thousands across continent

the abortion campaign. The women decided to go back to their groups and start organizing for February 14. Another workshop was held, dominated by Morton-Dixon-Rands-Benston, in which the many disagreements among themselves were made clear. No proposals came out of this workshop.

As the debate intensified those who had supported the abortion proposal were baited as all being "liberals" on the one hand and Young Socialists and members of the League for Socialist Action on the other. But most outrageous was the claim that abortion action supporters are "supporters of genocide."

Dixon tried to rationalize this vicious slander by linking the campaigns in the women's liberation movement for the right of women to control their own bodies with racist imperialists who force poor, non-white women into sterilizations against their will.

Other rationalizations, often contradictory, for the anti-mass action position were put forward.

Morton for example played upon both the conditioning of women to be "helpmates" and the honest desire of women in the movement to fight for human liberation. She said, "Women often have to choose whether or not to do something just for themselves, or to help other people," and that they should choose to "serve the people," not just women.

This is as insulting to the intelligence as a proposal that the real task of Quebecois is to learn English and help English Canadian workers radicalize. The struggles of all oppressed sectors are part of the process of overturning the power of capitalism, and these struggles can't be forced to march lock-step at some uniform pace worked out in an academic watch-tower.

But Dixon and Morton played upon the developing sentiment of women's liberationists, reflected at the conference, who are coming to realize that they must unite with other oppressed groups. For Dixon and Morton, this unity was posed as an alternative to the women's liberation movement.

There is a growing understanding with in the movement that women's total liberation will be possible only with a complete change in society — a revolution — and that other oppressed groups are also struggling for such a change. Dixon manipulated this understanding to present the wrong conclusion: that a movement organized around women's oppression as a sex is a non-revolutionary movement.

Dixon does not recognize that a mass movement of women demanding control of their bodies and of their lives — demands which the capitalist system cannot meet — is a revolutionary movement in its own right. Socialists have to build such a movement, which forges the anger and frustration of millions of women into a powerful anti-capitalist force, speeding the achievement of a socialist society where these demands can be met.

Women who are workers, who are Black, Quebecois, or Native, are doubly or triply oppressed. But this does not cancel out women's own oppression as a sex.

The privileges offered by this system to students, professionals, intellectuals, are miniscule compared to the degradation these women must accept because they are women — and often only serve to heighten the contradictions.

The movement must continue to expose the lack of alternatives available to women in this society and mobilize the growing numbers of women who are refusing to accept such restriction.

"Women's liberation is human liberation." The demand of women — more than half of the population — to have access to the resources of this society in order to have control over their own lives, is crucial to the carrying out of a socialist revolution which will liberate humanity from the milenniaof class oppression.

Only one concrete direction came from the conference. It was posed by the abortion campaign — that of building a dynamic mass movement around specific demands that expose the roots of women's oppression. All the slanderous arguments against this strategy only make it clear that there is no other alternative for the movement, that it will either forge ahead in their direction or it will be set back. And the women of Canada will not allow this movement to dissipate.

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Doctor tells his colleagues to risk jailing for abortion

by Katie Curtin

TORONTO — "Women cannot be equal or fully emancipated until they have control over their own bodies," Dr. Henry Morgantaler told an audience of 150 women and men here November 26. "Women have the absolute fundamental right to terminate a pregnancy."

Morgentaler, an active campaigner for many years for the right of women to abortion, has been charged with performing illegal abortions, and faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The meeting was sponsored by a broad coalition including the Toronto Women's Caucus and the Toronto Humanist Association.

"The doctor's duty is to help patients rather than to obey these outdated laws," Morgentaler said. "Doctors should be prepared to engage in civil disobedience, to go to jail if necessary. Refusal to perform an abortion can lead to a woman's death."

Morgentaler expressed his wholehearted support for the women's liberation movement. "Women don't want to be sex objects," he explained. "They want to be persons." Instead, however, the government is saying to women, "I am the owner of your uterus."

Morgentaler pointed to evidence of overwhelming public support, including even the recent Liberal party policy conference, for repeal of the abortion laws. Yet Trudeau continues to maintain that "public morality" is not ready for it. Unanimous consent of all parties, he tells us, is required to change the law. But, Morgentaler noted, Trudeau didn't feel such consent was necessary to push through the War Measures Act.

The meeting launched the Toronto end of the cross-country campaign for free abortions. Chairwoman Pam Furlotte of the Toronto Women's Caucus appealed for support of everyone in the campaign, which will culminate in protest actions for the right to abortion Feb. 14.

"Women must demand their rights," said Dr. Morgentaler, "and must continue to fight until victory."

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Meaning of report on "Status of Women" page 4

Parity: issue for UAW page 2

Report of gov't commission on women bolsters campaign for free abortion

by Brenda Zannis

The Toronto Women's Caucus called December 10 for a cross-Canada escalation of the campaign for the right of free abortion on demand.

The women of Canada, it said, must rally to demand immediate implementation of the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to grant women the right to decide whether or not they wish to terminate pregnancy, up to 12 weeks after conception.

This recommendation, along with the commission's call for a vastly extended government subsidized program of day care centers and for equal pay and preferential hiring would do much, the caucus says, to free women from many of the most inhuman degrading and unjust aspects of our oppression.

The report is proof of the growing impact of the women's liberation movement, the caucus statement continues. "Since its inception, the women's liberation movement has raised the issue of abortion — the right that women control their own bodies and lives — as a central issue before the movement. Last May, women from across Canada converged on Ottawa in a massive campaign for free abortion on demand."

The government's arrogant answer to this mass action was that it has no intention of even discussing the question.

Trudeau claimed that he, personally, was not opposed to "abortion on demand," but that public opinion was.

This problem doesn't seem to have posed itself to the government on other occasions when it has passed unpopular anti-labor laws or when it suspended all Canada's civil liberties, by decreeing the War Measures Act.

But now Trudeau has no excuse whatsoever. The Royal Commission report cannot be shrugged off as the opinion of a small minority — its recommendations flow from opinions expressed in countless

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Demonstration for abortion on demand at Ottawa last spring.

Royal Commission report can help build mass movement

Proposals vindicate women's liberation demands

by Joan Newbigging

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Joan Newbigging is a member of the LSA/ LSO women's commission and was co-author of the League's brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

Abortion on demand during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy; a network of government subsidized day care centers; special measures to be taken to ensure equality of women at work — the federal government to become a model in employment practices in relation to women.

These are a few of the far-reaching recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women whose report was released Dec. 6.

The report reveals the growing impact and strength of the women's liberation movement. It lays guidelines for the emancipation of women which are far in advance of today's attitudes and beliefs, and which, if broadly interpreted, have profound implications.

The report reflects the fact that great numbers of women made their opinions, ideas and problems heard by the commission, giving it a real picture of the prejudices and difficulties Canadian women face.

Thousands participated in the 37 days of hearings held across the country. 469 briefs were presented, from a wide range of individuals and organizations including the League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière.

The recommendations, if implemented, would constitute important gains for Canadian women. The struggle for their implementation will give a powerful new impetus to the women's liberation movement.

An enormous challenge is now posed to that movement to publicize the report's findings and to campaign for the implementation of its key recommendations.

With the publication of this report, the fact of woman's oppression is no longer debatable. The report marshalls a wide range of facts, which irrefutably demonstrate the intense and pervasive discrimination women face at every level of Canadian society.

It reveals, for example, how two thirds of the employees of banks are women, only 10.3% of whom earn more than $5,000 annually, whereas 72.3% of male employees earn more than $5,000. In a study of retail stores the commission found that where 57% of the full-time employees were women, they held only 27.5% of the higher paid sales positions.

Current day care and nursery facilities meet the needs of one percent of the children of all ages of working mothers, 3% of those children of working mothers between three and five years.

The recommendations of the commission cover a wide range of areas — marriage, pension plans, problems of Canada's native peoples, taxation, education, federal government employment practices, etc. In one way or another they touch on basically all the key demands raised by the women's liberation movement, and acknowledge many of the principles of the movement.

The report accepts that a woman should have the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion (though the commissioners would limit this right to the first 12 weeks of pregnancy). Only one of the Commissioners, Elsie MacGill, added a minority report calling for abortion to be removed from the Criminal Code.

The report emphasizes that it is the responsibility of government to finance a large scale education campaign on birth control and to provide a network of birth control centers across the country.

It advocates maternity leave of up to 18 weeks with financial compensation (even if this is only unemployment insurance).

It seeks to come to grips with the fact that the educational system distorts the potential of girls and defines their future role through the sex-typing of roles in text books and of occupations in guidance instruction.

It recognizes that preferential hiring and upgrading of women is necessary in certain circumstances to overcome discrimination and calls on the federal government to take such steps with its employees.

It stresses the need for a network of government-subsidized day care centers for the children of women employed both inside and outside the home. It calls for a guaranteed annual income for single parent families.

Many of the recommendations listed are echos of demands raised in the brief presented to the commission by the League for Socialist Action.

At the same time the report has enormous limitations. The solutions posed in no way meet the problem in the terms that the commission itself presents it.

The report cites various sources to demonstrate how the cost of higher education hits hardest at women — yet fails to raise the demand, outlined in the LSA brief "that all educational fees be abolished and an income provided for students adequate to meet their essential needs while attending school."

It emphasizes that large numbers of women participated on their own initiative in the production of the report, and yet its recommendations for continuing structures to be set up to oversee the implementation of the report, to continue further studies and make further proposals, etc., it does not allow for their continued participation.

It fails to come to grips with the problem of women within the family, although it does go a long way towards recognizing the responsibility of society in relation to the needs of women and children.

It describes at length the problems of the unpaid housewife, recognizing her financial dependence as a central problem, but fails to call for a state wage for home-makers. Basically its only solution is a network of day care centers, but even here the principle that these facilities should be free, available to all and controlled by those who use them is not recognized.

This overall problem was pinpointed in the LSA brief. "Woman must be freed from her traditional responsibilities for the child: the child bas the right to everything that society can provide, regardless of the resources of the parents. Parents should not be burdened with providing for the child but every facility should be available for the full develop-

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ment of the child."

The fundamental weakness of the report lies in its failure to investigate the roots of woman's oppression, and its resultant inability to pose any real, long term solutions.

It recognizes that "true equality of opportunity for women can only result from radical changes in our way of life and social organization," viewing its recommendations as the first step in this process. It does not tell us what these changes are or how they might come about.

This was the central question discussed in the LSA brief. It discussed how woman's social role and position throughout human society has been determined by the social productive relations. "From the matriarchy — the social relations of primitive communist society — has evolved what we know today as capitalism. Here too the social relations determine woman's role. The main feature of this society is the private ownership of the means of production and their utilization solely for the profit of those owning them. An appreciation of this is vitally important to the understanding of the present situation of woman.

"Woman has been relegated to the role of raising and training the next generation of workers, and, on occasion, when required, has been thrust directly into the work force herself. Woman has been shunted on and off the labor market to meet the needs of an unplanned and profit-motivated economy.

"As long as capitalist society prevails whatever gains woman establishes, in material form and in status, are always tentative and in jeopardy."

The liberation of woman, the LSA emphasized, can never be achieved in an unjust and exploitative society. "It can only be found in a society where the great productive forces created by our collective effort are at the full disposal of humanity, where the economy is planned to meet human need and where production is geared for human use — in a socialist society."

Most commentators have judged the report purely on the basis of its legalistic recommendations and not on the basis of the impact it can have on the women's liberation movement.

Ontario New Democratic Party leader Stephen Lewis viewed the report in strictly parliamentary terms: "They're just a series of palliatives that don't cut to the root of the problem. For the next five years the federal government will be hung up on just how far it should go in amending the Criminal Code." He makes no mention of the impact that the women's liberation movement will have on this process, particularly if it launches a campaign for the implementation of the recommendations.

Some women's liberation activists have dismissed the report out of hand as an attempt to coopt the movement. There is considerable validity to this view.

As expressed by Anthony Westell of the Toronto Star, "governments today are sensing uneasily the rising ferment of the movement for women's liberation. Just as they turn to look for practical ways to meet the discontent, here is the commission with its blueprint."

Yet in dismissing the entire report as condescending half measures, these women's liberation activists are in fact playing into the hands of the Establishment. They would leave the government's pretensions unchallenged, its limitations unexposed.

By picking up the report, we can turn it into our weapon. We can use it to educate women and to mobilize them in the struggle for their liberation. We can use it to expose the government's inability to take measures which will really meet our needs, which will in fact liberate us.

The struggle for implementation of the main recommendations will spur the women's liberation movement forward far beyond the modest goals of the report, and direct it all the more clearly against the source of woman's oppression, capitalism.

This is why the campaign for February 14, whose main thrust is the Commission's demand for the right to abortion, is of central importance now.

Grace MacInnis, NDP MP has urged women to action in support of commission proposals.

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...Impetus to abortion campaign

submissions by women's organizations and by individuals at open hearings across the country. Its views on abortion laws go a long way toward expressing what Canadian women are thinking and what they want.

Grace MacInnis, New Democratic Party MP, has called on the women of Canada to put pressure on the government to ensure that these recommendations are put into effect.

To this end, the Toronto Women's Caucus is beginning an extensive campaign of meetings and actions to culminate in the cross-country action already projected for February 14.

The campaign in Toronto begins with a speakout December 17, featuring Elsie MacGill, a member of the Royal Commission. This will be followed by a Christmas torchlight precession, on the theme, "Every child a wanted child, every mother a willing mother," the presentation of a brief to the Ontario government demanding the setting up of abortion clinics now, other public meetings, newspaper articles, leafleting, etc.

The newspaper Velvet Fist, published by the caucus, will be used extensively to build the campaign across the country. A

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coalition of women's groups will be set up to build February 14 into a massive cross-Canada action.

The caucus sees the report as a direct response to the growing ferment around women's liberation, echoing and picking up many of the key demands of the women's liberation movement.

"It is a glaring statement and irrefutable proof of the injustices women face in Canadian society. It has its serious limitations — its recommendations are often half-measures totally out of proportion with the magnitude of the problems it describes. However, it provides a focus around which women will rally to struggle for their liberation."

The caucus calls for distribution of the report to all women free of charge. But, more than that, it calls upon all women to join together in the cross-country campaign leading up to Frebruary 14, whose main thrust will be to win the right to free abortion on demand.

The government must not refuse to take action around our demands. It must not spend three years or even three months "considering" the recommendations that the Royal Commission has already discussed for three years. Trudeau must act now on the commission report. The government must grant now free abortion on demand!

Rally Feb. 13-14 for abortion on demand

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labor Challenge

Vol. 2, No. 2 (24) February 1, 1971 15 cents

by Judy Koch

Across Canada women will be demonstrating on Feb. 13-14 for free abortion on demand.

Women from Ontario as well as representatives from the rest of Canada will be converging on Ottawa for a march on Parliament Hill, to be followed by an indoor meeting.

In British Columbia abortion advocates will confront the government with a major demonstration in Victoria Feb. 14.

These demonstrations, and others across the country, represent growing numbers of women fed up with the total disregard for their rights and lives by governments which refuse to grant the right to abortion.

The Ottawa action is receiving growing support, particularly from NDP circles. The action has been endorsed by Stephen Lewis, leader of the Ontario NDP, Jim Laxer, Waffle candidate for the NDP federal leadership, NDP Ontario MPPs Jim and Margaret Renwick, and Krista Maeots of the NDP Women's Liberation group.

Doris Anderson, editor of Chatelaine, leading trade unionist Grace Hartman, June Callwood and Bruno Gerussi have also endorsed the action.

The posters announcing the Ottawa action proclaim as its theme, "Every child a wanted child, every mother a willing mother."

Despite Trudeau's phony abortion law reform, unwanted children are still born because women cannot obtain abortions — leaving many children to be neglected and mistreated by parents unable to meet their needs.

In addition tens of thousands of women must yearly undergo extremely dangerous illegal abortions. It is estimated that botched abortions still send thousands to hospital every year and kill hundreds.

A recent public opinion poll shows 44 percent of the population in favor of abortion on demand — revealing Trudeau's blatant hypocrisy in saying that lack of public support prevents his government from reforming abortion laws.

Now even the government's own Royal Commission on the Status of Women has come out in favor of the right to abortion.

The government is responding to the situation in its usual manner. Trudeau announced a two-day debate on abortion in parliament — but added that all parties must agree or the whole issue would be shelved. He knows quite well that with the tiny Social Credit party opposed to abortion, agreement is impossible. Women can no longer tolerate this toying around when their lives are at stake.

Sponsoring organizations in Toronto for the Feb. 14 action include all the main women's liberation groups: the Toronto Women's Caucus, the New Feminists, the Abortion Collective of the Women's Liberation Movement, as well as the League for Socialist Action, the Young Socialists and the Just Society.

Buses will be leaving Toronto at 7:00 a.m. from 188 Adelaide St. W. on Feb. 13. They will arrive in Ottawa at noon and return that evening.

For further information, contact the Abortion Campaign Committee, 188 Adelaide W., tel. 368-6583. In Vancouver contact the campaign at 1776 Alberin, tel. 684-3535.

Everyone is urged to demonstrate against the unjust abortion laws and tell the government loudly and clearly that it must act now since the lives of women are at stake.

Make hospitals grant abortion on demand

Toronto Women's Caucus tells City Hall

Two Toronto actions in recent weeks for the right to abortion have attracted wide attention and gathered new support for the February campaign.

On Jan. 20 Toronto Abortion Action Committee supporters picketed City Hall at a meeting where various aldermen were to be appointed to boards of city hospitals.

They demanded that city council commit its aldermen representatives on hospital boards to the following measures:

1) fight for repeal of abortion laws from the criminal code and for the elimination of abortion committees so women can have free abortion on demand;

2) in the meantime, instruct the abortion committees to give abortions to all women who want them;

3) establish abortion clinics and outpatient services in hospitals for abortion on a wide scale, and set up abortion information services.

Alderman Sewell read the letter they presented to the Council and demanded that prospective members state their views on it. They all refused.

The Abortion Action Committee will be restating these demands in a more detailed brief to be presented to city council and the local board of health.

In Toronto on Jan. 21 the high school supporters of the Toronto Women's Caucus held a demonstration in front of a meeting of the Toronto board of education in support of a proposal put forward by the management committee of the board calling for lessons in birth control and abortion.

Debbie Fraleigh, a spokeswoman for the group made a presentation to the board. She expressed support for the recommendation and called for the schools to supply birth control devices and information on obtaining abortions. After many objections the board passed the original proposal, adding a provision that parents had the right to exempt children from the course.

labor Challenge #25 (1971)

Abortion action shows road

by Lis Angus

February 13 marks a great achievement for Canadian women. When women march on Ottawa Feb. 13, it will mark the high point of the cross-country abortion campaign — the campaign which has focussed the anger and frustration of countless women demanding control of their bodies and their lives, and directed this anger to confront the real enemies of Canadian women, the Canadian government.

What an inspiring campaign it has been! When it was first projected, nobody dared speculate on how it would mushroom. Yet in the course of the last couple of months, we have seen groups and individuals right across the country pull in behind the campaign, taking it into the communities, the schools and universities of Canada.

Enthusiastic meetings have been held in student nurses' lounges. Participants in the Poor People's Conference in Toronto responded to the campaign with offers to help. High school women are leafletting, holding meetings in their schools — in Toronto, they picketed the Board of Education demanding that birth control devices be made available in the schools.

"Abortion Days" have been held on several campuses, gaining wide support for the campaign through panel discussions, films, etc. At the University of Toronto, women presented a brief demanding that the university provide a free abortion clinic on campus, and stating that the university must take the lead in pressuring the federal government to repeal all abortion laws.

The campaign is bringing together women with varying interests — students, working women, housewives, unemployed women, young women, old women — all working together in common cause.

Groups are building the campaign from Victoria B.C. to St. John's, Newfoundland. New women's liberation groups have sprung up across Ontario and the Maritimes out of the impetus of the campaign. Coalitions have been established to build the campaign — for

photo by Belfont

SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL! New York demonstration of 30,000 Aug. 26, 1970 showed power of mass action for women's liberation.

example, in Toronto the Abortion Campaign Committee combines the forces of all the women's liberation groups in the city, as well as several other organizations.

Right across the country, we've kept in touch with each other, worked together, helped each other out, and developed a new feeling of the unity and strength of the movement.

Inspiring as these developments are, they are only a beginning. The successes of the campaign point the way for the future of the women's liberation movement.

Women are moving. We are no longer just talking about our oppression; we are acting against those who sustain our oppression. And we are acting as a united force. This is how the movement will be built — by opening it up, reaching out to all women who agree with the basic demands of the movement, and actively involving them in united campaigns and actions to achieve these demands.

As the women's liberation movement moves ahead, the campaign for free abortion on demand will continue to be a central part of its actions. We're part way to victory now — we have to carry this struggle through to win a decisive battle for women.

We know from this campaign that the abortion issue plays a key role in introducing thousands of women to the dynamism of women's liberation. For many women who are just beginning to question their role in society, the idea of free abortion on demand gives an illuminating inslght into the concept of the right of women to control their lives. The enthusiasm with which women are

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Free abortion on demand, now

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rallying behind this demand is an indication of the base the women's liberation movement can develop.

We want to win the victory of free abortion on demand. We want women to be freed from the irrationalities of unplanned pregnancy and all the oppressions which are rationalized on the basis that a woman may become pregnant at any time — poor training, poor jobs, infrequent promotions, job insecurity, etc.

A victory in this struggle will give incalculable impetus to all the other struggles we carry — it will free women to participate in these struggles, and most importantly, it will show women how powerful they are when they unite in common action.

The struggle for free abortion on demand must continue to be spearheaded by the women's liberation movement, leading and giving direction to all the other forces which are coming in behind this campaign. Public support for the demand is mounting. 44% of Canadians now favor free abortion on demand, and this change in public opinion is reflected in the recent stand in favor of liberalized abortion taken by the United Church, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Hundreds of people attended a recent meeting of the Association to Repeal Canada's Abortion Laws in Toronto. As much as we welcome this support, and as essential as these forces are to the continuing campaign, they cannot alone win the struggle.

We in the women's liberation movement came to "free abortion on demand" from the understanding that women must control their lives. We know that the government — which has a big stake in keeping women in their place through the rationalization of unplanned pregnancy — is against this demand and will do all it can to divert it.

We know that even if the government is forced by popular pressure to change the abortion laws, this is only the beginning. We must fight for the facilities, the medical personnel, the information services, which will make free abortion on demand a reality, and without which a change in the laws is a hollow victory.

There is only one way to win this demand — the same way all the other demands of the movement will be won — through the united action of large numbers of people. We know that it will be a long hard fight, and that it is the women of this country who must lead it.

We, who are building a movement which gives expression to the anger and despair, the desires and dreams of all women, know that we can gather the forces to wrest control of our lives from all who control us. We know how basic this struggle is. The responsibility for seeing it through is ours. And we will proudly carry that responsibility through to victory.

'Wonderful Dora'

What do YOU make, Mr. Bulloch

Dear Mr. Bulloch:

I read your clothing store's advertisement in the newspaper. That's why I'm writing this letter.

You write about "Dora": "She was only seventeen when she applied for a job as a tailoress. . ." you tell us.

"Shy, timid, unable to speak English, accompanied by male members of her family. After deciding I was to be trusted she got permission to work on the quality tailoring your suit demands. Everyday on the job, her needle flying, every stitch perfect, singing her Italian songs, smiling her sweet smile."

She got married, you tell us. But she didn't lose any time off work. She fitted her honeymoon into her vacation time. Then her life became idyllic: "After a long day's toil, housework; waiting on her husband in that old-fashioned Italian way."

Now she's gone off to have her third baby and wants six more, you tell us.

"Wonderful Dora."

Yes, you can very well think Dora wonderful. The suits you sell are finely tailored. Your shops are doing well and you are making lots of money. Life is good. You can afford to be generous with your praise.

But it's Dora and the "many other Italian girls devoted to their art and families" who make the good life possible for you and your kind. How much do you pay Dora for her fast flying fingers? I've seen your posh shops with their $200 suits. How much of that $200 does Dora, the suits' creator, receive?

And you think Dora is as wonderful at home as on the job. Of course you do. She relieves you of the need to pay anything towards the rearing of the next generation of tailors and tailoresses you know you will need. And Dora's care for her husband makes it possible for your fellow businessmen to pay him lower wages than if he had to hire a housekeeper and cook.

But Dora really is wonderful. She is one of the millions of heroic women whose labor turns out so many of the goods produced in this country. Along with her long hours at work, she works long hours at home. When she is too old to work in your shop she will continue to work at home, caring for her daughters' children so that they might work for you. She needs her large family. She knows she will need the wages of her children when she is no longer young enough to work in your shop.

She has a strength, endurance and skill that you can't possibly imagine, for all your praise. The shop doesn't have her name over the door, it's true, and she reaps no profits from it, but it is by all rights her shop. Yet she will die before her time, worn out, tired from her hard life, with no material wealth to leave her children. And you, Bulloch, will probably die in your sleep from overeating at the age of 85, leaving a fine estate to be fought over by your relatives.

I know Dora's world. It is my world too. We both work a double shift, at home and on the job. For the one, we work without any wages, for the other, we are terribly underpaid. We only get to see our children in those busy hours between work and bed. We have no day care, let alone the 24-hour child care we need. We have little control over our pregnancies and even less control over our lives.

We also have the same aspirations, Dora and I. We want to shape our lives, our futures.

But you contrast Dora to "those liberated abortionists," who you say are "pitiful, unfruitful, unnatural in mind and body. . ." But this description, misapplied to Dora's sisters, is such an appropriate one — for you and your class. You are unfruitful — what do you produce, Mr. Bulloch?

There's an old saying: The valley belongs to the waterers that it may yield fruit. Get out of the way, Mr. Bulloch. Dora's day is dawning.

Ruby Turner

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A woman's rights come first

'defenders of unborn' told

by Gary Porter

VANCOUVER — "After eating a fried egg do you comment on how good the chicken tasted? When you see a squirrel with an acorn in its mouth do you wonder at how such a tiny animal can carry an oak tree?

"No! An egg is not a chicken. An acorn is not an oak tree. And a fetus is not a human being — but a woman is."

"Life is a question of probabilities and potentialities for the fetus. But a woman's life is real and actual."

Mary Trew of the Women's Liberation Alliance was replying to the "abortion-is-murder" arguments of Dr. John Connolly and Bernice Gerrard, speaking for a group calling itself the Voice of the Unborn.

Over 400 attended the heated debate on the right of women to abortion at Vancouver City College Feb. 1. The debate was organized by the Women's Liberation Alliance, as part of the cross-Canada abortion campaign.

Connolly argued that a mere 338 women were listed as having died from the effects of illegal hack abortions in Canada over 14 years.

Dr. Gregory Makaroff, arguing with Trew for the right to free abortion on demand, described this attitude as "chilling" and called for abortion to be removed from the realm of criminal law.

Makaroff, recently fined and given a three-month suspended sentence for performing abortions, has now been suspended from the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons.

She blasted the illusion that anti-abortionists care about children. "These people don't give a damn what happens to children after they are born," she said.

"They don't care if a child is hungry or cold or poor or uneducated. No, it is we, the women, who must look after the children. Their only concern is to make damn sure that we are forced to bear them."

The Alliance chairwoman, Margaret Henderson, announced plans for a lobby in Victoria and a mass demonstration in Vancouver on Feb. 13 for free abortions on demand, part of the Canada-wide actions on that day.

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Quebec left recovers

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ios war deepens, N. Vietnam next?

pril 24 focus for antiwar protests

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Women unite– abortion is our right'

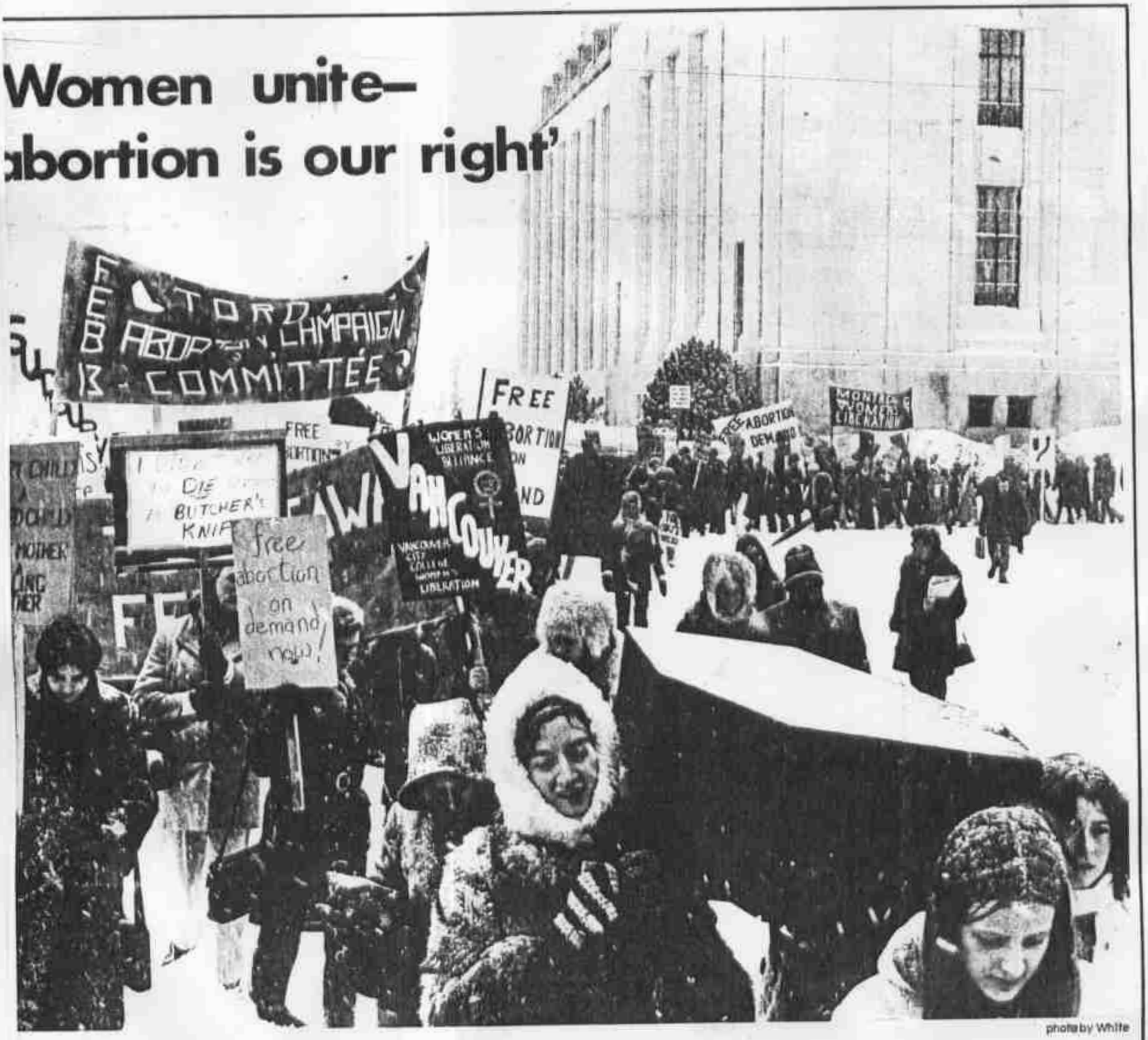

photo by White

'URNING THE COFFIN TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME. Demon- tors in Ottawa for the right to free abortion on demand setting out for iament Hill Feb. 13. The coffin, symbolic of thousands of Canadian women killed by botched abortions, was deposited at the door of Parliament, in protest against the Trudeau government's refusal to grant the right to abortion.

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Anger, pride, unity mark abortion march

by Lis Angus

"It seems the only way you can get into Parliament is if you agree with the government — but 44 percent of Canadians agree with us!" Pam Furlotte, of the Toronto Abortion Campaign Committee, expressed the anger all of us felt on Feb. 13.

After travelling from all parts of the country to demand that the government act now to meet the need of women for free abortion on demand, our only welcome was two rows of burly RCMP officers denying us access to the Parliament buildings.

In the middle of the worst snowstorm of the winter, we had marched through downtown Ottawa, our bright placards and banners the only color in the whiteness of the storm. Four sisters carried a black coffin symbolizing the unnecessary death of thousands of women from botched, illegal abortions. We sang and chanted as we marched: "The state has no right in the wombs of the nation"; "Women unite — stand up and fight — free abortion is our right." We shouted those songs and slogans; they echoed down the tall columns of buildings. We were proud as we shouted — proud of our sisters, proud of the strength and the rightness of our struggle. People lined up in front of the stores to watch and listen, and many joined us. No storm could weaken us — we were women united, fighting for our rights, marching side by side with the men who supported us.

We stood in the wind and driving snow on Parliament Hill, over 300 of us. Another 50 were stranded in the blizzard on the road from Toronto. We heard for the first time that we would not be allowed to meet in the room we had requested — the same room we had met in last year.

No government representatives were there to meet us, to hear the brief we had prepared. The indifference of the Canadian government to the needs of women was fully revealed to all of us.

We left the coffin in front of the door to remind the government of the uncounted victims of its refusal to recognize women's right to abortion on demand. On it we left instruments which are commonly used for abortions: bent coathangers, Lysol, pads of cotton. Many of us felt an almost overwhelming rage at a government which callously forces women to mutilate themselves with these crude implements.

We returned to the church where our march had started from, to hold the rally we had not been allowed to hold at Parliament. Chairwoman Lorna Grant

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Abortion rallies in 9 cities show strength of movement

The deepening roots of women's liberation sentiment in Canada were clearly revealed in the wide range of localities which participated in the Feb. 13 actions. While the Ottawa march encompassed participants from groups in 14 cities, parallel actions were held at eight points across the country.

The Vancouver Women's Liberation Alliance followed up presentation of a brief to B.C. health minister Loffmark Feb. 10 with a march and rally of 200 Feb. 13.

In Saskatoon 100 protested against Trudeau at the opening of the winter games. The action was only one aspect of a broad campaign at which some 700 in all participated in five meetings and three demonstrations.

When Trudeau dropped down to Regina he was again personally confronted by advocates of the right to abortion, who formed part of a broader demonstration.

Forty persons marched at the shoppers' mall in Brandon, Man., and later won the right to state their case at a New Democratic Party dinner for T.C. Douglas. The Winnipeg federal building was picketed in 15-below-zero weather.

Some 50 persons marched for free abortion on demand in Fredericton, N.B. and Halifax. And the Kitchener contingent on the Ottawa march followed up a hectic night riding and pushing buses through the blizzard with an action Feb. 14 in their home town.

In Montreal an action will be held on March 8, International Women's Day, calling particular attention to the stubborn refusal of French-language hospitals to perform abortions.

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photo by White

STORMING THE GATES. Protesters for the right to free abortion on demand hammered their brief to the door of Parliament — or as close to it as they could get.

opened the rally. "It's very significant, the way we've been locked out of parliament today," she said. "It's indicative of all the things we've been locked out of — control of our lives, knowledge of our histories." A woman shouted from the floor, "We won't be locked out of our futures, though!"

The platform was crowded with representatives from 14 cities. Greetings were given to the rally from all the groups who had participated in the campaign, particularly noting the solidarity actions being held on the 13th in Fredericton, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Letters were read from Grace Hartman, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE, and from Grace McInnis, the only woman Member of Parliament, NDP representative from Vancouver-Kingsway.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the Montreal doctor who is currently being prosecuted for performing illegal but medically safe abortions, addressed the rally. "I think you are in the vanguard of women in Canada; each one of you probably represents at least 100,000 more." He stated that the most recent statistics available from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics showed that in 1966, 45,482 women were admitted to hospitals for complications from abortions. He estimated that at least 150,000 abortions occur in Canada every year. Yet, in the first year of the new abortion laws, only about 4,000 legal abortions were performed.

For most of us, the most important and the most exciting part of the day was the strategy meeting of women's liberationists after the rally. In spite of hunger and fatigue, in spite of long bus rides ahead in the blizzard — the women voted overwhelmingly to forego supper to talk about the future direction of the movement coming out of this campaign.

We shared our difficulties, our experiences, our ideas with each other. Out of the meeting grew a tremendous feeling of unity and a determination to go back and mobilize all those thousands of women Dr. Morgentaler spoke of.

A series of proposals was put forward to continue the abortion campaign through local actions around Mother's Day May 9; to build International Women's Day March 8 as a day of women's liberation; to hold a series of regional conferences to coordinate and plan the building of this movement, leading up to another national women's liberation conference; and to use the Velvet Fist, the newspaper of the Toronto Women's Caucus, to coordinate all these actions. All these proposals were passed unanimously.

The meeting ended with singing "Solidarity forever." That feeling of solidarity was very real and very strong. As we got back into our buses for the long night's drive through the drifting snow, we knew that though the struggle for women's liberation might be long and hard, we would be able to carry it through. We know that sisterhood is, and will be, unimaginably powerful.

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LSA replies to red-baiting attack

Socialists and women's liberation

On March 30, the Toronto Telegram, a daily paper notorious for its red-baiting, published a front-page article attacking the Toronto Women's Caucus (TWC.) The article was based on a letter written by two former members of the TWC, Corileen North and Yvonne Trower.

The letter attacks the leading role of these socialist women in the TWC claiming there is a contradiction between being a member of the LSA or YS and the women's liberation movement. It states: "Leadership must be indigenous, not imposed. Particularly not imposed by women who owe *first* loyalty to a political party which practises democratic centralism and has always been dominated by male-oriented revolutionary socialists."

The letter continues: "We feel that the fact that Troskyist goals in the WL areas are fundamentally contradictory (and totally selfish) is one of the main reasons why the participation of Trotskyist women in the WL movement has created so much disruption, dissention, and political bloodshed."

It maintains that this problem of domination by Trotskyists is "not unique to the TWC; it is happening in WL groups all across North America."

The following statement is a reply to the letter by the Women's Commission of the League for Socialist Action Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière and the Young Socialists/Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes.

Three days ago the daily press published a letter by Corileen North and Yvonne Trower, two founding members of the Toronto Women's Caucus, who have since become inactive. The letter was also circulated "to the women's liberation movement throughout North America and Great Britain." It raises serious questions about the non-exclusionist, democratic character of the women's liberation movement. It charges that the Toronto Women's Caucus (TWC), one of the larger and more active women's liberation organizations in Canada, is being destroyed by the subversive takeover of the group by a "small but disciplined radical group" which is "male-oriented." The group? ... the women of the Young Socialists and the League for Socialist Action.

This five-page letter with its quotations from documents, all suspicious words underlined, and its insinuations that this is just one of many attacks against the "Trotskyists" taking place in the women's liberation movement on this continent can be summed up in one word — red-baiting.

The main elements of their case are that the socialist women of the LSA and YS push their mass perspective in the TWC, encourage women members of their organization to join the TWC and work to become leaders of it; try to convince other women's liberationists to become socialists and join their organizations; caucus separately and work to carry out the decisions of their caucus.

Such charges! They can only be taken seriously if one assumes 1. that socialism and women's liberation are at odds; 2. that the women of the LSA and YS, unlike other women, are not really oppressed, in fact are not really women, but something else called "Trotskyists"; and 3. that the other women of the women's liberation movement are sub-intelligent dupes who let these "male-oriented" robots walk all over them.

Ludicrous as it is when examined, this red-baiting is a traditional method of attack against radical movements — by the ruling class of this country, the same ones who maintain the oppression of women. The non-exclusionist, democratic character of the TWC has always been its strength. Trower, North, and the editors of the Toronto Telegram will be disappointed if they expect to see any division of the women's liberation movement in the face of this attack.

We, women of the YS and LSA, are socialists and women's liberationists. We see no contradiction. Our Marxism enables us to see that the oppression of women is at the very root of this system. This, far from dividing our loyalties, teaches us how to fight against our oppression. We know that we must wipe this system of oppression off the face of this earth and build a society based on human liberation.

What kind of a women's liberation movement are socialist women working to build? We are building a movement where women who have been denied their humanity for centuries can learn how to organize against their oppression.

photo by White

CONFRONTING TRUDEAU. Feb. 13 protests in Ottawa (above) and across Canada demanded the government grant free abortion on demand. Socialists have been prominent in building these and other mass protests of the women's liberation movement.

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Together they can develop their abilities and understanding. This movement must be open to all women and must make itself visible through action in the streets around the many specific demands of women. Such a movement points the finger at the real oppressors of women — the rulers of Canada, their governments, institutions, etc.

We women of the Young Socialists and League for Socialist Action have dedicated our lives to changing society. This dedication could be called "selfish." We want to be liberated. In our whole beings, every moment of our lives, we feel our oppression as women. This oppression only deepens our determination to struggle for a new society.

We don't insist that all women who want to join the women's movement must first be socialists and realize the necessity of a more general struggle including both sexes. This would narrow the movement disastrously. But we do insist on our right to put forward our socialist ideas and attempt to win women to them and our organization. If Trower and North object to us doing so it can only be because they object to these aims but fear debating them with us. To attack us for being "male-oriented" because we realize the struggle to change society must include both sexes is downright ridiculous! By such logic all women who work, live or participate in any activities with men should be discouraged from belonging to the movement because they are male-oriented.

We view the women's liberation movement as a profoundly revolutionary development, challenging the fundamental premises of this society. Its demands such as 24-hour child care, free abortion on demand, etc. point in the direction of a complete reorganization of society where the welfare of humans is put before the accumulation of profits by a handful of men. The women's liberation movement is for us an essential part of the struggle that will decide the fate of womankind and mankind. We feel saddened that these two sisters have decided to put this struggle aside for the time being. We don't ask for guarantees that there will be no problems in this struggle. But the stakes are high and we won't rest until we have won human liberation.

labor Challenge #30 (1971) April

Why May 8 rallies call: free abortion on demand

by Lis Angus

The Toronto Abortion Campaign Committee will have to pay to use City Hall Square facilities on May 8, while beauty contests can use them free of charge, Toronto's all-male Parks Committee has decided.

The reason for this distinction? The abortion committee is a partisan group, not a "safe" community group. And as well, as Alderman Fred Beavis put it, "Beauty contests uplift women."

What garbage! Certainly our situation desperately needs some uplifting, but Mr. Beavis and his colleagues are doing their best to put obstacles in the way of our doing anything about it.

The rally and festival planned for City Hall on May 8 is the culmination of a series of actions in the ongoing campaign for free abortion on demand and free birth control information and devices in the high schools.

Demonstrations will be held in several other centers, including Montreal and Vancouver, on the May 8-9 weekend. In Waterloo, a teach-in centered on women as housewives and mothers will be held on May 7-8, followed by a demonstration on May 9 (Mothers Day).

The central theme of the campaign is "Control of our Bodies, Control of our Lives."

Winning the specific demands of this campaign — for free abortion on demand and for the right to birth control information and devices, particularly in the high schools — will be a decisive step against the degradation and oppression of centuries.

The fear of unwanted pregnancy hangs over every woman from the age of twelve. Birth control is inaccessible to large numbers of women — particularly high school women — and even the best birth control is neither completely effective nor completely safe. Abortion is expensive, legally available in only a minority of cases, and highly dangerous when obtained from illegally operating, unqualified practitioners.

Yet the effect of an unplanned pregnancy on the life of a woman is devastating. She may have to give up her education, or her job; she will certainly have to rearrange any plans she may have had, to center around the need to care and provide for a child. If she decides to seek an abortion, at best she will have to go through humiliating red tape and weeks of anxious waiting for a hospital abortion — at worst she faces infaction, mutilation and death at the hands of a backstreet butcher.

Even without becoming pregnant, the effect on her life of potential and impending motherhood is all-pervasive. Her whole personality is shaped around the role our society imposes on her biology, a role defined by motherhood and wifehood, not by her own skills and abilities.

Her education is directed to relatively unskilled jobs; her participation in the work force is considered "temporary" — filling in time until she gets pregnant. She will find it very difficult to get a job with any responsibility or decent pay, she will be among the first to go if there are layoffs, etc., all because she is not considered a "real" member of the work force — and the factor continually raised as excuse for this treatment is that she has no control over when the whether she will bear children.

Yet the government is callously ignoring women's demands for free abortion and birth control. Trudeau recently gave a speech on women's rights — and did not even mention abortion.

The only real option open to women is united action to actually change that situation: to make birth control and abortion readily available to every woman. The powerful forces of capitalism are ranged against us in this struggle.

The growing campaign is drawing in large numbers of Canadians who support our demands, and May 8 will show all those opposing the liberation of women from restrictions on their lives that there are no obstacles that can stop us.

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FLQ set back Quebec struggle

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he next stage in women's liberation

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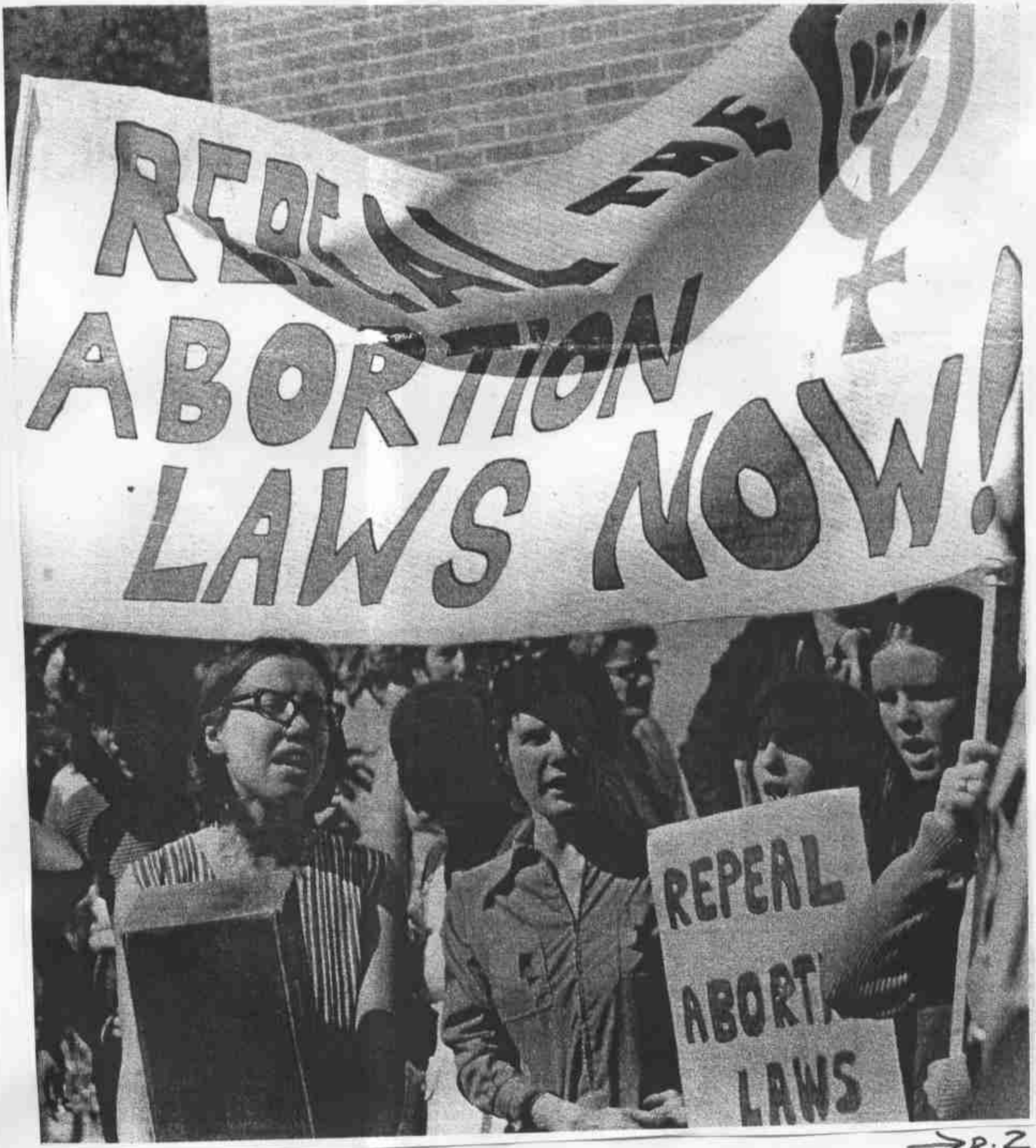

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Repeal anti abortion law

by Jacquie Henderson

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One hundred years ago Canadian women were struggling for the right to vote. Their struggle, which lasted for over fifty years, became the focus for the burning desire of Canadian women to assert their rights as human beings capable of thinking and deciding on political questions. Those women, many of whom were pioneers and in no sense "the weaker sex", had to fight a long hard battle to win this basic right.

Their struggle is hidden from us and their names struck out of the history texts, but the new feminist movement of the 1970's is rediscovering our foremothers, learning to be proud of them, and carrying their struggle forward.

Just as the right to vote was the focus for women a century ago in their struggle for equal rights, the right to abortion has emerged today as the focus of women's struggle for control of our lives. Over the past two years abortion has clearly become the central issue around which women have united in struggle.

There is a growing pressure to win this demand now, to force the government to grant abortion on demand. And the reactionary forces are mobilizing to attack the rights of women as they see the pressure growing. The Catholic Church, the Friends of the Fetus and the Trudeau administration are all united in their determination to prevent women from gaining the right to control our own bodies.

The struggle for the right to legal abortion, initiated by the women's liberation movement, has succeeded in radically changing public opinion in this country. One year ago the Gallup poll registered 21 percent of Canadians in favor of changing the abortion laws. Last February the sentiment for abortion on demand rose to 44 percent according to this poll. Since then many of the most conservative organizations in Canada, notably the Canadian Medical Association have come out for the legalization of abortion.

This change in heart did not come from within these gentlemen's souls — it was forced on them by the women's liberation movement through its demonstrations, rallies, meetings and other actions drawing the attention of Canadians to the fact that we women must have the right to control our bodies. It was not the CMA that published the facts about the hundreds of thousands of women who are forced to seek illegal abortions each year. It was the feminist movement. And it was these women who spoke up about the hundreds of their sisters who die every year from these backroom abortions. And it is the feminists who will lead the campaign to

Photo by

TORONTO WOMENS' CAUCUS and Womens' Liberation Movement demonstrate against Trudeau in Jun

actually wipe abortion out of the Criminal Code.

But if the struggle is to actually succeed, it must be as big a struggle as the one that won the vote. It must unite all those women who want the laws repealed. It must include all sorts of activities that expose and put pressure on the government.

Organize to win

The major task before the women's liberation movement now is to spearhead the growing sentiment for repeal of the abortion laws and mobilize it into a a powerful movement that can actually win

Throughout the last year there has been much debate among feminists on the role of the abortion struggle in building the women's liberation movement. Some feminists have felt that abortion is an artificial issue, or at least only one of many issues and should not be given priority.

While it is true that the right to control her own body is only one of many aspects of a woman's oppression, it is also true that it is one of the most central. It is the most pressing problem all women face.

Control of our bodies is so fundamental to our liberation that legalizing abortion would be a gigantic step forward for women. The constant worry about unwanted pregnancy, the complete lack of control of our bodies is one of the heaviest weights holding women down. Legalizing abortion will cut across all the myths and prejudices that prop up the main justifications for denying us equal education, equal pay and better jobs. That is why it is seen by women across the country as the biggest question right now.

Intensifying the struggle for the right to abortion through uniting in action on this issue does not mean giving up the fight on other issues. These struggles will be strengthened and advanced by an abortion victory which would demonstrate the power of women to fight resolutely and to win victories. Mass struggles will emerge in the future over the other demands of women's liberation too. But it is clear that the first concrete challenge to the women's liberation movement is the abortion issue.

That means building a movement for abortion that is much broader than the present women's liberation movement. Many women can agree on the need to repeal the abortion laws who can't agree on other demands. Each additional demand starts to exclude women who may only support the abortion demand, and therefore cuts across the abortion campaign. In fact by adding other demands the basis of the campaign is undercut — there no longer is an abortion *campaign*.

The abortion campaign clearly puts to governnent on the spot. They have two choices: to fail to repeal the laws and thus expose themselves as being callously indifferent to the needs of the women of Canada; or to repeal the laws and thereby grant a big concession that will not only significantly improve women's lives but also spur them on to struggle for more gains.

Repeat is key demand

The abortion demonstrations held thus far have almost all centered on the

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issue of free abortion on demand. These actions, such as the Feb. 13 demonstration in Ottawa and support actions across Canada, have been essential in changing public opinion, inspiring others to take up the abortion issue and focusing the blame on the federal government. They have created a situation where Trudeau can't go anywhere in the country without being confronted by angry women demanding he act on the abortion issue. They have pushed even conservative organizations to take a stand on abortion.

But they were limited by their insistence that all must unite around the slogan free abortion on demand. Many more women understand the demand for repeal of the abortion laws than understand why abortion should be free. One of the main lessons learned in the abortion struggle so far is that in order for the campaign to be effective, for it to draw in the masses of women who correctly see the law as the major hurdle to getting abortions, we must unite in struggle around the demand of repeal of the abortion laws.

Yet, although our immediate struggle is for repeal of the laws, our long term goal remains free abortion on demand. In order for all women to have ready access to abortions they must not only be legal but also free so that no woman is denied one because of lack of money. A campaign for repeal poses most clearly what we are telling the government to do right now — remove all sections of the criminal code that deal with abortion.

We want this section repealed because the fundamental problem now is not cost of abortions but the fact that it is a *crime* to seek an abortion or to perform one for non-medical reasons. The "criminals" pay dearly for their acts. Dr. Makaroff in Vancouver just finished serving three months in jail after being convicted of performing abortions. Dr. Morgentaler of Montreal still faces charges for the same "offense". Hundreds of women each year receive the death sentence dealt by butcher abortionists for their "crime."

Repeal of the abortion laws would certainly be no hollow victory as any woman can testify who has been forced to choose between the degradation, pain, mutilation and perhaps death from an illegal abortion or bearing an unwanted child. It can unite the largest number of women in struggle against the government. And repeal is a demand we can win.

Broad support for releal

Women in organizations like the Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (ARCAL) and the New Democratic Party, both of which have a strong stand for repeal but not for free abortion on demand, can be brought into the struggle for repea. ARCAL has already carried a vigorous battle against the laws. The NDP has not only taken a stand for repeal at its federal convention last spring but NDP MP Grace MacInnis has a private members bill for repeal pending in Parliament. The United Church, the Unitarians, and many other organizations have a stand for repeal but not for free abortion on demand. If this campaign is to win it must unite all these forces in a campaign around the demand of repeal, a demand not only correct but effective in mobilizing for victory.

All those forces that are in favor of repeal must be brought together in united front committees in every city and town organized around this single focus. These committees can include women's liberation groups, church women, trade union representatives, YWCA's, doctors, NDP women and all sorts of individual women and groups who agree on the need for repeal.

These committees can gather support and raise money from organizations like the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the Canadian Medical Association challenging them to act on their resolutions. They can bring together various types of activities, meetings, test cases, petitions, provincial bills, municipal briefs, hospital actions, etc., and use them to build a single campaign that directs its main fire at the federal government and its laws.

Trudeau adjourned the House again without holding the promised abortion debate. No doubt he will try to do the same thing at the end of the fall session unless we organize now. Our united committees will demand that at this session the abortion laws be repealed. We must begin now to build the united campaign that will put so much force behind that demand that the government will have to give in.

This campaign will include many more women than does the present feminist movement and through their struggle many more women will become feminists. Rather than holding the movement back it will swell the ranks of the women's liberation movement and provide a larger audience for other demands such as free abortion on demand, free child care, and equal pay. And it will win the first big victory for women since our feminist foremothers forced the government to grant them the vote.

labor Challenge

#37 (Aug. 1971) p.1

Struggle for women's rights across Europe

by Ross Dowson
recently returned from a 4½ month stay in Europe

In those European countries where there is a developing struggle for the liberation of the oppressed majority, the main thrust of the movement is for the repeal of the anti-abortion laws. The right to abortion on demand is the focal point in the conflict between the forces of the status quo and the rising forces for women's liberation in Europe, as it is on the North American continent.

The status of women varies widely across the European continent. The legal status of women in Spain is abysmal, even lower than it was in Quebec when the Catholic hierarchy was riding high and being vigorously utilized by the capitalist class to keep women in the kitchen, creche and kindergarten. Spanish women are deprived of the most elementary democratic rights — they remain under the legal control of the family until 25 years of age, unless they marry — or join a religious order.

Before opening a bank account, obtaining a driver's license or a passport, holding a plitical office, or even taking a job — a married Spanish woman needs her husband's written consent. A man may put his wife's children up for adoption without her permission and take a child born out of wedlock away from its mother.

But even where women have achieved some democratic rights — even in some of the most advanced capitalist countries of Europe where there is a powerful labor and socialist movement — women have little or no control over their own bodies. The law bars women from access to abortion except under exceptional circumstances laid down by the state and implemented by the medical hierarchy.

This fact of the oppression of over half the population of the continent has been most dramatically brought to world attention by the actions of a group of French women and a group of West German women this Spring.

Early in April, 343 French women, most of them prominent writers, actresses and TV personalities, as well as members of The Women's Liberation Movement of France and The Movement for Freedom of Abortion, made a sensational demand for free access to contraceptive methods and freedom of abortion — by signing a statement — confessing to having had an abortion.

By this simple declaration, under the French abortion law, which has its origins in the Napoleonic Code, they were subject to two years in prison. Several hundred women have been convicted every year under this law. Between 1924 and 1940 there was on an average 300 to 400 abortion convictions yearly. During the Vichy period this rose to 3 to 4,000 convictions,

MEMBERS OF THE IRISH WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT leaving a chemist's in Northern Ireland with contraceptives which they took through the customs barriers of the Irish Republic in defiance of a law which bans importation or sale of contraceptives. Since a woman senator introduced a bill to repeal these laws a broad struggle and a movement has been developing. According to the London Observer "contraception is the issue which has drawn to them women of all classes in Irish society."

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but today the number has fallen back to its pre-war level. The overwhelming majority of those convicted are of course from lower income groups — too poor to take the abortion trains or planes to Geneva or London.

The French government has attempted to blunt the protest with concessions that sustain its main position. It has now conceded the sale of contraceptive devices in French pharmacies for the first time. It has also authorized abortions — but only under special conditions — where the mother's life is endangered, where there is a certainty the future child would be abnormal, and where pregnancy is the result of a proven act of rape. Thus French women still have no real control over their own bodies.

Even so the French Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, aided by the National Council of the Order of Physicians, mobilized strong opposition to any liberalization of the laws. They were aided in this by the powerfully-based and influential Communist Party of France. A statement by the political bureau of the Communist Party not only accepted the restrictions contained in the new government regulations, but explicitly rejected "theories which make the right of abortion one of the essential means of women's liberation...". But the statement of the 343 French women reads: "Free abortion on demand is not the ultimate goal of the struggle of women. On the contrary, it is only the most elementary demand, the demand without which the political struggle cannot even begin...".

A campaign is well underway to force the repeal of anti-abortion laws in West Germany where an estimated 400,000 illegal abortions are performed annually. These result in at least 50 deaths because of the conditions under which they are often performed. Thousands of German women who have the means now travel to London for the operation.

By the first week in June, 374 women had signed a public statement that they have had an illegal abortion and are therefore liable to imprisonment up to 5 years under Paragraph 218 of the Criminal Code. The campaign was given a special boost when 24 well-known West German women, among them actresses, journalists, singers, film stars and fashion models, had their pictures published on the front page of the June 2 issue of the weekly news magazine **Stern**, along with the confession: "We have had an abortion."

Legal proceedings have been opened against 14 signers, including movie stars Romy Schneider and Vera Tschechova. In German jurisprudence, state attorneys have no choice but to open legal proceedings against suspected law breakers, even if they accuse themselves.

In 1969 there were 276 prosecutions under the law. A town councillor in Hanau has filed charges against Tschechova on the grounds that West German democracy will be discredited if "ordinary" women are prosecuted, "while prominent film stars are able to provocatively publish the details of their own abortions."

The movement to repeal Paragraph 218 encompasses such women's groups as Women's Action '70 in Frankfurt and the Socialist Women's League in West Berlin. According to **Der Speigel** younger women members of the Social Democratic party and the Free Democratic party are joining the campaign.

The first action of the Movement for the Liberation of the Italian Woman, which held its initial national meeting this spring, is the promotion of a bill which would legalize abortions. Members are now trying to collect 50,000 signatures required to present a "vox populi" bill to the Italian parliament. Abortion is severely punished by laws, supported by the Roman Catholic church but framed by the former fascist and openly racist regime. They appear under a section of the Criminal Code entitled "crimes against the integrity and health of the race." The Vatican's newspaper L'Osservatore Romano has denounced the movement.

A recent congress of Italian gynaecologists stated that there were probably "between one and three million clandestine abortions" in Italy each year — others estimate four million. At least 20,000 Italian women die each year as the result of illegal abortions performed under outrageous conditions. This clandestine abortion racket is said to net its operators at least 82 million dollars a year.

Since the initiation of the signature campaign three senators of the Socialist party have tabled a bill to legalize abortions. However their proposal would place the decision in the hands of the authorities to decide if the mother's health is endangered, if the foetus is likely to be abnormal, or in case of proven rape or incest — rather than in the hands of the woman herself who is defined by the women's liberation movement as "the manager of her maternity."

One might think that the Netherlands, despite the fact that it has the lowest percentage of working married women in Europe, is well along the road towards the elimination of anti-abortion laws. It is sometimes depicted, along with the Scandinavian countries, to be in the

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vanguard, with its legalization of homosexuality, and its very colorful and active Dolle Mina movement.

Not so. Abortions are illegal in the Netherlands. The 175,000 strong Association for Sexual Reform, has as one of its major activities the obtaining of abortions — in England. The association says that it is sending 20 to 40 women a day on cut-rate abortion flights to England. Up to 3,000 women have gone through its services for an abortion there — at an inclusive price of $335.

With women of sufficient means going from all over the continent to England for abortions, it might appear that this question so crucial to women's liberation has been solved there by the legalization of abortion.

The four year old abortion act does not by any means grant a woman the right to make her own decision as to whether to have an abortion or not. The act evasively placed this crucial decision in the hands of the doctor, not the woman.

The 1967 law extended the right to abortion allowing it upon the approval of two doctors for eugenic reasons (because of a deformed fetus), or, if done to preserve the physical or mental health of the woman and her family.

The medical profession is against abortion on demand. Ninety-two percent of the consultants who answered the Royal College of Obstretricians and Gynaecologists survey, voted against it. Like the 47 percent of the RCOG consultants who want to exclude abortion on socio-economic grounds the British Medical Association from the outset has opposed the social clause which permits abortion on the grounds that the health of "existing children" of the family might be affected.

Many of the doctors opposing abortion on demand are consultants on the National Health Service and deprive women of the use of its facilities which should be completely available to them.

As a director of the Birmingham Pregnancy Advisory Service, a charitable abortion agency, noted, hospital consultants form a self-appointed bottleneck to abortion. "They often impose their own morality on patients." In 1970, she noted, 12,000 women turned to the BPAS for help, nearly 55 percent referred by their family doctors who had either tried or recognized the futility of trying to obtain Health Service abortion on other than strong clinical grounds.

The result is that of the 90,000 abortions performed in England and Wales a year only about 55 percent were obtained on the National Health Service.

The other 44 percent are carried out in the small number of tiny nursing homes that are approved by the Department of Health — the 54 private clinics that exist solely to make a profit. Since they cost from 200 to 300,000 dollars to construct to the department's standards, and doctors are prevented by the General Medical Council's strictures on advertising from getting the necessary clients, business interests operate them. The London Park View Clinic charges from $335 to $375 for an abortion, with doctor participants raking in fabulous incomes. The Langham Street Clinic made a gross income of almost $4 million a year.

This vicious exploitation of women seeking abortion serves to embolden traditionalists, religious bigots and obscurantists who oppose abortion in principle. They have been mounting a campaign designed to (1) intimidate those doctors who defend abortion on demand and are prepared to sign in good faith that a woman needs an abortion, and (2) to cut out of the Abortion Act those sections that imply the legality of abortion on socio-economic grounds.

June 20 saw some 8,000 persons march through the sfreets of Birmingham carrying placards enscribed Abortion Kills, to protest the abortion act. Speakers at the rally included Anglican and Roman Catholic church leaders and Muslim priests. Other organizations called The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and Life, are carrying on intensive activity against the right to abortion. This campaign is having considerable effect. According to the London Times the Heath government is not licensing any more clinics because of the pressures of the anti-abortion lobby.

Even in England, where despite the dollar sign that has been placed around them, there is greater availability of abortion than anywhere else in Europe, abortion on demand remains a challenging issue before the women's liberation movement.

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Photo by White

HEARING CASE FOR ABORTION. Over 500 attended debate. Speaking from audience is Jacquie Henderson.

500 at debate

The right to abortion

On Aug. 9 over 500 persons packed a hall at the University of Toronto to hear a panel of five debate the question of abortion. Organized by Summer at Humber College, a provincially-funded youth program, the panel included Dr. Barry Brown and Dr. Dawne Jubb of the Right to Life Committee, Larry Solway, radio broadcaster, Harris Weinberg, lawyer, and Lorna Grant of the Toronto Women's Caucus.

The anti-abortionists Brown and Jubb argued that the fetus is human life and should not be killed. Since abortion is equivalent to killing, according to Brown, the whole legal system is threatened by the repeal of the laws.

Solway and Weinberg both supported the right of a woman to abortion, the latter pointing out the appalling lack of facilities available for abortion in Toronto.

The overwhelming majority of those who spoke during the lively discussion period supported a woman's right to choose whether she will have an abortion or not.

This debate reflected the growing sentiment in favor of the repeal of the abortion laws and the possibilities for a broad campaign for repeal this fall.

The following is the initial speech presented by panelist Lorna Grant of the Toronto Women's Caucus.

This debate seems to be very concerned about human life. And that's what I want to see us all discussing tonight — human life, the lives of thousands of women who have faced and will continue to face unwanted pregnancies.

Before I get into my presentation I would like to comment on one thing. I find it very difficult, almost intolerable to sit here and debate whether or not women have a right to abortion while thousands of women are sitting at home right at this moment wondering whether or not they are pregnant, trying to decide what to do about it if they are. Each year in Canada there are approximately 100,000 illegal abortions, with 1,000 of these resulting in death or mutilation of the woman.

Why do so many women risk their lives in this way? They seek illegal abortions because it is the only course open to them, because under the present laws they have no choice whatsoever.

For years women have been under constant pressure to have children. Our culture tells us that we are not complete women unless we have children. We have been taught that our ultimate fulfillment is to be a wife and mother. We are NOT expected to make decisions about our lives, because, after all, the decisions have already been made for us. But this assumption overlooks one fact — that women are human beings, not pre-programmed machines — just as able and just as anxious to make decisions about our lives as the male sex.

Photo by White

LORNA GRANT defends abortion on demand.

If a woman cannot decide when and if to bear a child, any other decisions she may wish to make are irrelevant. In order to control our lives we must be in a position to control our bodies. Every woman must be able to demand an abortion if she chooses, the same as she would any other medical procedure. No one has the right to decide for her. No one is going to force an abortion on any woman who does not want one, but surely it is time for the government to end the situation which forces thousands of women to choose between giving birth to an unwanted child or undergoing the risks of an illegal abortion.

Abortion is often thought to be a hazardous proceedure. However, most medical experts agree that, when carried out by competent physicians in sterile conditions, it is a relatively safe procedure. In fact, according to Dr. Alan Guttmacher, in his book Birth Control and Love, abortion is ten times safer than carrying the pregnancy through to term. In Canada, abortion has been legal under certain conditions for only a short period — but in some Eastern European countries abortion on demand has been legal for some time.

Czechoslovakia has reported 140,000 consecutive abortions without a single death. Hungary reports 2.5 deaths per 100,000. Compare this with the mortality rate for, say, tonsellectomies in the United States, which is 17 per 100,000. Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures.

Now we come to the question of the morality of abortion — is abortion murder? The morality of abortion is a pretty abstract thing to a woman who is pregnant and wondering what she is going to do about it, but nevertheless it has been raised by some members of this panel. Just let me pose a couple of questions to everyone here.

When you eat a fried egg do you comment on how good the chicken tasted? Or when you see a squirrel carrying an acorn in its mouth do you wonder how such a tiny

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animal can carry an oak tree? I would doubt it. An egg is not a chicken — an acorn is not an oak tree — and a fetus is not a human being. But a woman is! Life is a question of probability and chance for the fetus. But a woman's life is real and actual. It is absolutely absurd to equate the rights of a pregnant woman to the rights of a fetus.

It is very easy to over-react to the emotion-laden word "murder," but murder does indeed take place — the murder of women. Now just who is responsible for these murders that take place? Who are the criminals? We have the petty criminals like the backroom abortionists, and the rest who profit from the present abortion laws and the misery of women with no where else to go.

Then we have the big-time criminals like Trudeau and his government, who have been promising an abortion debate for three years and callously ignore the fact that women have died from abortions in those three years. Then we have the provincial governments who keep passing the buck, and we have the hospital boards who tie women seeking abortion up in red tape for two months and then say no, or who stall around until it is too late to perform a safe abortion. And finally we have all those who oppose a woman's right to decide for herself.

So just who is committing a crime — is it the woman who has excercised her right to choose or is it those who try to impose their philosophical and religious standards on her?

I have been appalled, but not too surprised at the number of people who have absolutely refused to recognize that an abortion problem exists in real life, that women really are dying.

Perhaps they do not realize that, as I mentioned earlier, thousands of women every year are getting abortions, most of which are illegal under the present law. Women who can afford to travel abroad can getsafe abortions carried out in sterile conditions. But those who cannot pay are being butchered, mutilated and tortured by people who are often quacks. Often well-intentioned neighbours attempt abortion with barbarous instruments such as coat hangers or detergent bleach. That is the situation that exists in real life. Those are the facts and they are not debatable. The only question that is left to answer nowis what are you, all of you here doing about it?

The Canadian Medical Association, the United Church and many other traditionally conservative organizations have agreed that abortion should be a private matter between a woman and her doctor. The New Democratic Party also favors abortion law repeal and Grace MacInnis, the only woman in the House of Commons, has submitted a bill to Parliament favoring the removal of abortion from the criminal code. Most important, more and more women are asserting our right to decide for ourselves when and IF we will bear children.

This reveals a general change in womens' attitudes concerning our bodies and our sexual lives in general. We are protesting, refusing to bend to feelings of guilt and shame over our sexuality which society tries to instill in us from childhood in thousands of different and subtle ways.

We are proud to be women and we have faith in ourselves, and no one else, to bring about change for our benefit. We refuse to stand by any longer while women have their lives ended or destroyed by unwanted pregnancies or illegal abortions. In a society which is one of the most technically advanced in the world, this situation is intolerable. The abortion laws must be repealed immediately. A woman has the right to control her own body, by whatever means she may choose — it must be her decision.

Abortion coalitions formed

Meetings in Vancouver and Toronto Aug. 12 established coalitions of women's organizations to fight for repeal of the anti-abortion laws.

In Vancouver, B.C. Women for an Abortion Law Repeal Coalition was formed by representatives of 19 organizations, among them student women's liberation groups, the Status of Women Action and Coordinating Council, the Association for the Repeal of Canadian Abortion Laws (ARCAL), the National Black Coalition of Canada, Women's Liberation Alliance, United Church Women, the New Democratic Party and the NDP Committee on Women's Rights, and the Young Socialists and League for Socialist Action.

Among individuals attending the meeting was Grace MacInnis, MP, who is presently sponsoring a private members' bill for repeal of the criminal code restrictions on abortion.

The Ontario Women for an Abortion Law Repeal Coalition brings together such groups as ARCAL, Toronto Women's Caucus, Kitchener-Waterloo Women's Liberation, the Toronto and District Liberal Association, and the High School Birth Control Rights Campaign.

Both coalitions will be holding conferences in early October — Oct. 2 in Toronto, Oct. 2-3 in Vancouver — to plan major fall actions. The Vancouver conference, on the theme "Let Women Decide — Repeal All Abortion Laws Now", will include a public session open to men.

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Answers to some objections

Why abortion is a woman's right

by Lis Angus

Many different forces are coming together to work out a united campaign to repeal the abortion laws. In the course of this campaign, two different views are being expressed on the slogan "abortion: a woman's right to choose." These two views represent fundamentally different approaches to the struggle.

Feminists should be prepared to deal with the questions that are being raised, a number of which are discussed here.

"I don't believe the decision to have an abortion should be entirely up to the woman. What about the prospective father — surely he has some rights too?"

Pregnancy — physically and psychically a very demanding experience — is borne entirely by the woman. It is her body from which the fetus must draw nutrition. It is she who risks side effects such as morning sickness or swollen legs or more serious complications. It is she who has to give up her job. It is she who will have to undergo labor. Most importantly, it is she who, for the next eighteen or so years, will have the primary responsibility for the care of that child. Pregnancy means that a woman must reorganize her entire life to center around the needs of a growing child. The implications of pregnancy are long-term and far-reaching.

If she is unable or unwilling to accept all the pressures and strains of motherhood, no one else — not even her husband — has the right to impose a pregnancy on her against her will.

She may of course consult the opinions and feelings of her husband, her parents, her friends — but this is up to her. None of these people have the right to make the decision for her.

"But what about her doctor? No other medical procedures are decided entirely by the patient — you can't just walk in and demand a tonsillectomy, for example. The decision is jointly made by the patient and the doctor."

There are important differences between a condition like tonsillitis and pregnancy. For one thing, it is possible to have only a slight case of tonsillitis, when it may be advisable to try to reduce the infection rather than remove the tonsils, as is sometimes necessary when they are severely infected. But it is not possible to be slightly pregnant. A doctor can tell a woman whether or not she is pregnant; but he can't tell her whether or not the pregnancy is desirable. Only she knows whether or not she wants a child. Once she has made the decision, it is the doctor's responsibility to give her competent medical assistance, or direct her to such assistance. This should be the extent of the doctor's involvement in the decision.

"I think that abortion should be purely a matter of private conscience for the individuals involved."

Certainly. No woman who wants to continue her pregnancy should be under any pressure to have an abortion. No doctor or nurse who objects to performing or assisting in abortions should be forced to do so.

However, every woman who does decide to have an abortion has the right to receive

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FOR ABORTION ON DEMAND. Demonstration in Ottawa, 1970.

one. No one else's moral opinions can be allowed to interfere with this right.

This means that a doctor who refuses to perform abortions should be required to refer the woman to colleagues who will. He or she has no right to prevent a woman from obtaining an abortion if she wants one; their only right should be to decide whether they will perform it.

Furthermore, no hospital receiving public funds has the right to deny use of its facilities for abortions, no matter what the private opinions of its staff members or advisors. Otherwise, all women served by that hospital are denied the opportunity of choosing abortions.

"But if abortion is left entirely up to the woman, won't abortion be used as a method of birth control?"

A woman has the right to choose any mtehod of birth control she desires. She may, if she so wishes use the method of abortion. In any case, the authorities have so far refused to devote the necessary resources to developing a completely safe and effective means of birth control; they do not even make the currently developed methods available to all women.

All the above questions cut against the main objective of our struggle: the right of all women to abortion on demand. Our goal is not just liberalization of the present anti-abortion laws, nor are we fighting for abortion law repeal because the law isn't being respected or because repeal is the better of two evils. We concede nothing to the opinion that abortion is essentially a bad thing. We are fighting for repeal, for abortion on demand, because it is necessary if women are to gain any control over their own lives.

As long as abortion is not available as a woman's right, she faces the constant threat of unwanted pregnancy. As long as she has no control over pregnancy, she has no possibility of planning her life.

This factor — her susceptability to pregnancy — has served as the rationale for the injustices and inequalities women face in all areas of society. It is used to justify discrimination against women in the labor market and the educatiinal system. Winning the right to abortion will cut across this network of myths and prejudices, and provide the basis for further advances.

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Current issue includes extensive report on abortion debate and campaign for repeal of abortion laws; also features articles on socialization of women.

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Local coalitions building campaign

by Donna Nelson

The campaign to repeal the abortion laws has now moved into high gear. The cross-country campaign will be publicly launched at a press conference in Ottawa Sept. 23 with the announcement of a petition demanding abortion law repeal, which will be circulated across the country.

Present at the news conference will be New Democrat Grace MacInnis, the only woman member of parliament. She has a bill pending in the house which would repeal the abortion laws. Other participants will include Lore Perron of the Association to Repeal Abortion Laws, Robert Kaplan, Liberal MP for North York and representatives from the abortion law repeal coalitions in Toronto and Montreal.

Many areas are forming broad coalitions with the purpose of uniting **all** women to map out a strategy to build a powerful long-range campaign against the government. Several of these coalitions will be launched by the convening of democratic, decision-making conferences to decide on action over the coming months. The following are abridged notes from our correspondents on the campaign's progress.

Ontario: A Women's Abortion Action Conference has been called for Saturday, Oct. 2. Women from across the province will meet in Toronto for the all-day conference and through a series of plenary and workshop sessions decide on how to build the abortion law repeal campaign over the coming months.

The conference was called by the Ontario Women for an Abortion Law Repeal Coalition. Some of the initial sponsors include Doris Anderson, Editor, Chatelaine; Association for Repeal of Canadian Abortion Laws; June Callwood; Dorothy Martin, President, Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario; Lorna Grant, Toronto Women's Caucus; Esther Greenglass; Planned Parenthood Association; Laura Sabia; and the National Council of Jewish Women.

The coalition now has a functional office in downtown Toronto and a full-time organizer on staff to build the conference. As well, a tour of Ontario cities is underway to mobilize women from across the province to come into Toronto on Oct. 2. Thousands of pieces of literature publicizing the conference are being circulated and a button will be available whortly. The conference is for women only. The coalition's address and phone number are: P.O. Box 5673, Station A, Toronto. Tel. 863-9773.

Montreal: A French-language coalition has been formed and is organizing a conference for Oct. 23. Among initial sponsors is Pauline Julien, well-known Quebecois singer. Publicity is going up on the major French campuses.

An English-language coalition, Montreal Women's Coalition for Abortion Repeal, has an office in the YWCA. This coalition will hold a conference late in October and will be sending representatives to the Toronto conference. The student newspaper The Georgian reports that the coalition is "planning to bring the abortion issue into public focus through open meetings, debates, leafletting, and the mass media." They can be contacted c o YWCA, 1355 Dorchester W. Montreal, 866-9941 ext. 44.

GRACE MacINNIS, (NDP), has put bill before parliament calling for repeal of anti-abortion laws.

Manitoba: The Winnipeg Abortion Action Committee is scheduling a meeting to form a coalition on Sept. 22. They are already circulating a petition for abortion law repeal. For further information contact 122-251 Broadway Ave., Winnipeg.

Saskatoon: A preliminary meeting to plan the abortion campaign has been called and there has been an excellent response from interested organizations and individuals.

British Columbia: B.C. Women for an Abortion Law Repeal Coalition are holding a conference on Oct. 3. This conference is being well publicized outside of Vancouver, where the conference is being held, and organizers have obtained two hours of a phone-in radio show to publicize the conference the week before it takes place. Local newspapers have also given wide publicity to the coalition, which now has an office and a full-time staff worker. The theme of the conference is "Let Women Decide — Repeal Abortion Laws Now". A special evening session will be open to men. The Coalition's address is: 889 Helmcken St., Vancouver. Tel. 687-4309.

United States: The Women's National Abortion Action Coalition has issued an appeal for international actions on Nov. 20. The appeal reads in part: "In the United States, women from many backgrounds are uniting in the fight for the right to abortion. On Nov. 20 we will march in massive numbers on Washington, D.C. and San Francisco to demand the repeal of all abortion laws, with no forced sterilization and the repeal of all anti-contraception laws.

"We call on our sisters around the world to unite with us on that day — to bring our power together, to let the world hear in one united voice and many languages our slogan: "Abortion: A Woman's Right to Choose". When we join together throughout the world, no force can stop us until we win."

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Unite in action to win abortion

by the Women's Commission of the League for Socialist Action-Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere

On Oct. 2-3 women's conferences will take place in three major Canadian cities — Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver — bringing together women from all walks of life to launch a united campaign for repeal of the abortion laws. These conferences, which promise to be truly representative of the wide range of individuals and organizations that have taken a stand for repeal, will undoubtedly mark a historic milestone along the road towards the removal of the abortion laws from the Criminal Code.

The resignation of Manitoba's Highways minister Joe Borowski from the NDP government as a result of public reaction against his attacks on the pro-abortion campaign provides a vivid example of the movement's capacity to win victories. The conferences face the challenge of carrying the struggle forward to further victories; of building an ongoing movement which, through speakouts, meetings, petition campaigns and demonstrations, is constantly rallying together the massive sentiment that now exists for repeal into a strong and visible force that will shake that seat of power on Parliament Hill.

The discussions at the conferences will no doubt be rich and varied, reflecting the broad range of participants. Many viewpoints will be expressed and many proposals discussed. There will be high school students and university professors, members of the Liberal party and of the NDP, socialists and women from church groups, feminists and women who have not yet come across the feminist movement. The conference proceedings should allow for full democratic discussion by all participants, so that these broad forces can be united in a single movement — unified behind the conference decisions on the campaign.

Pressures will no doubt exist to divide the participants from each other. We must not give in to them. It is only through a united campaign based on our common agreement on the need for abortion law repeal and on our common determination to struggle for this goal, that we can ever win this victory.

The campaign which the conferences will launch can have a powerful impact on Canadian society. Women who are alienated from one another today will discover the power of sisterhood, their strength when they unite together in struggle. This campaign will be the precursor of important battles that lie before us — for government-financed 24-hour child-care centers, for equal pay for equal work, for an end to the discrimination women face in all areas of society — on the road to our liberation.

Italian socialist questions view of women's liberation

Mailbag

Rome, Italy

I would like to inform you of a few details on the Italian women's liberation movement which Ross Dowson touched on in his article appearing in the Aug. 9 issue of Labor Challenge.

The Italian movement for women's liberation is not a real political movement. It contains some groups of different tendencies which blew apart last spring. They are now fighting each other on matters which have nothing to do with the class struggle.

They are basically petty-bourgeois groups with a sort of charismatic leader in the micro-Radical party, certainly outside the development of the Italian left.

The re-aligned revolutionary socialist left will have to come to grips with women's liberation but right now it is trying to channel the struggle into more direct political issues.

Edgardo Pellegrini
Editor Bandiera Rossa
monthly of the GCR, Italian section of the Fourth International

P.S. Italian anti-abortion law no longer appears under that section of the Criminal Code entitled "crimes against integrity and health of the race".

Ross Dowson replies:

Each year in Italy, some 20,000 women die from botched-up abortions. This death toll, largely from the ranks of working class women, is the result of laws sustained by the capitalist system and one of its chief bulwarks, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, that deprive them of an elementary right — by making abortions illegal.

Across the world women are moving into struggle. A key demand that is mobilizing them, that is bringing them into the political, the anti-capitalist struggle, is control over their own bodies — abortion on demand.

Are the massive but completely politically bankrupt "socialist" and "communist" parties going to continue to be able to decide what are and what are not political issues — at great cost to the entire working class? Perhaps it will be women who will play the key role in that decision in Italy.

Ross Dowson

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Why feminists focus on issue of abortion

by Lis Angus

Some feminists feel that focusing on the abortion struggle will divert and possibly destroy the women's liberation movement. They argue, as Shulamith Firestone does in The Dialectic of Sex, that the early women's rights movement declined because its energies were channeled into one issue: suffrage.

Firestone acknowledges that suffrage was the only issue which could unite diverse women's organizations; but she has only contempt for "conservative feminism, with its concentration on broad, unitive, single-issues like suffrage" — which, though she does not mention it, involved literally millions of women in suffrage organizations across North America and Europe. She goes on to state that "the granting of the vote ... killed the women's rights movement."

This distorted view of the suffrage movement is based on opposition to mass action and a disdain for the importance of victories in building a movement. Applied to today's movement, this view is dangerous and defeatist.

"Single-issue organizing" did not kill the early feminist movement; it was precisely **the focus on the suffrage issue which ex-**

Then. . .

tended the women's movement into all corners of society, and which kept the movement alive and militant during times when most other social struggles had dissipated. A single focus gave the movement cohesion and strength, and demonstrated above all that women can organize as women to fight for and win important concessions.

The right to abortion has emerged today as the issue which is extending the boundaries of the feminist movement into all layers of society. It is precisely through struggle around issues such as these — and winning victories like these — that the feminist movement will grow.

And it is through such struggles that women will come to understand the limitations of this society's ability to meet their needs; more and more women will come to the conclusion that this whole system must be changed — that the struggle for feminism is the struggle for socialism.

What are the facts about the early feminist movement?

The women's movement did not exist in a vacuum. It blossomed in the mid-19th century in a period of widespread agitation for democratic rights for oppressed groups. The abolitionist movement in the U.S., the populist movement and the rebellion of 1837 in Canada, the farmers movement on the prairies, the international growth of the labor movement and the socialist movement — these formed the climate for the growth of the early feminist movement.

Although the early feminists agitated around many issues, including educational opportunities and less confining dress standards for women, the struggle for the vote emerged as the key issue before the movement — and correctly so: like denial of abortion, the denial of the vote was a blatant denial of women's right to control their destiny. If the suffragists had not won the vote, it would be one of the first tasks before today's movement.

Increasing numbers of women were able to identify with the suffrage struggle. 100,000 signatures appeared on a suffrage petition presented in 1910 to the Ontario legislature. An Alberta petition around the same time had 12,000 signatures. The largest American suffrage organization had two million members in 1916.

It is true that the women's rights movement had real limitations. Most of the women involved — including the leadership — had illusions that the vote would give them the power to enact all the further reforms needed by women. But this reflected profound illusions they had about society in general: they did not understand how integral the oppression of women was to capitalist society, nor how limited was this society's ability to meet women's needs.

But in spite of these and other shortcomings, women won a real victory in the vote. Why then did the movement not go further than it did?

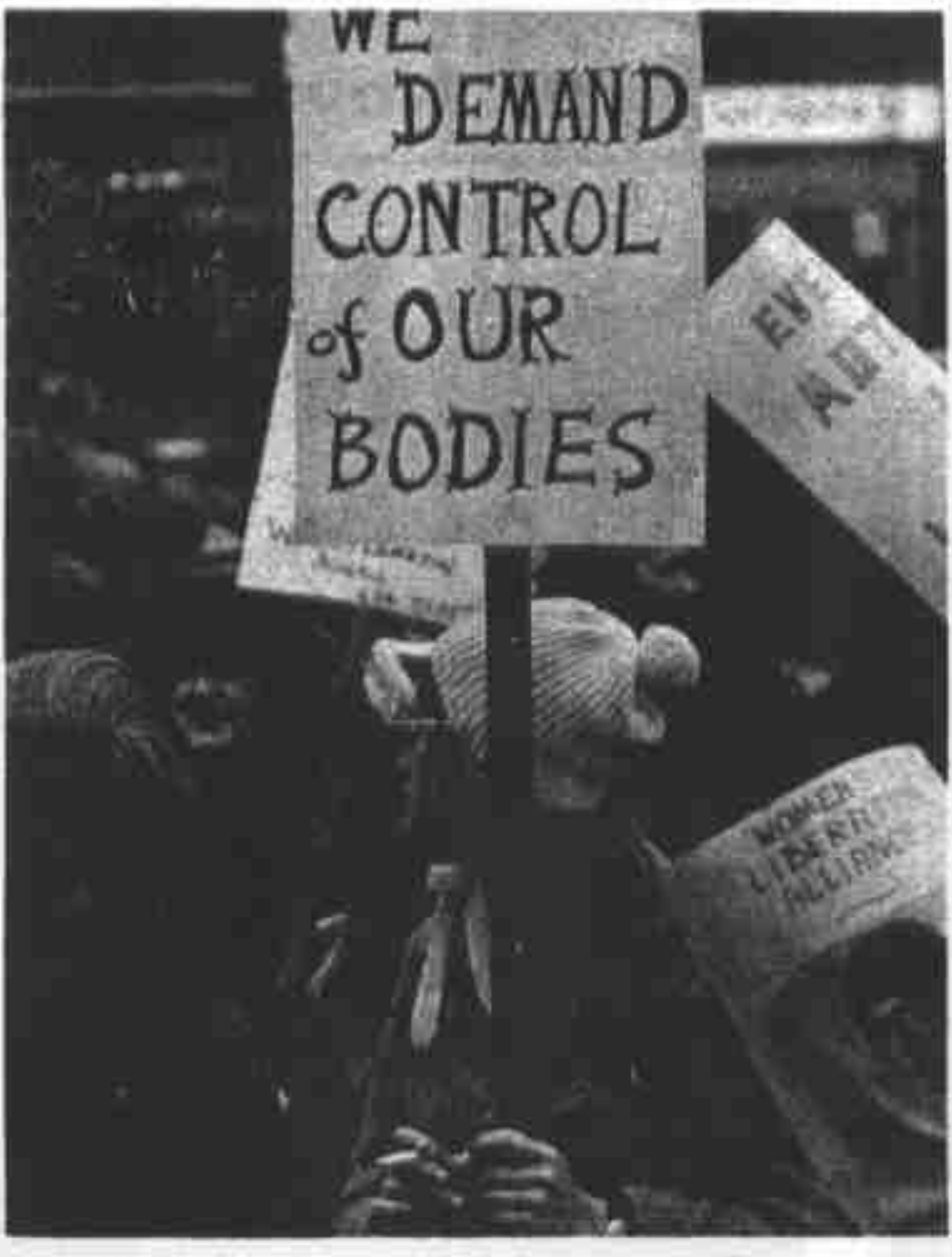
One of the biggest factors which drove feminism underground was the onset of a period of general reaction and conservatism produced by the economic expansion of the 1920s. The movement's leadership lacked an understanding of the character of class society; the socialist movement of the time — itself in a period of decline — did not respond to inject this understanding into the feminist movement.

Feminists turned to personal struggles rather than to organized political ones. The flappers of the 1920s, winning freedom of dress and appearance for women, were products of feminism, as were the women who individually extended the educational and professional rights won by earlier feminists.

Today's feminist movement surfaced in a period of worldwide radicalization around such issues as Vietnam, civil rights, national liberation. Increased educational opportunities and access to jobs for women make the myriad limitations imposed on their lives all the more blatant. At the same time, technological advances in birth control and abortion methods directly pose the possibility of women controlling what happens to their bodies.

The abortion issue assumes such central importance because it touches all women — even women who are only beginning to be affected by the radical ideas of our time can identify with this issue. Moreover, it strikes at the very root of woman's oppression. Women's lack of control of their bodies is used to back the claim that woman's nature is "subjective," that they are unable to control their minds.

And abortion is a far more profoundly radicalizing issue than the vote was. It leads women to consider other issues, other ways in which their lives are limited — above all, it



. . .and now.

puts the role of the family into question, by challenging women's subjection to the child-rearing role which is a basic underpinning of the family — a mainstay of capitalist society.

The fact that the suffrage movement existed and won the victories that it did means that today's movement can start out on a much higher level — we can build on the experiences and gains won by the early feminists through mass struggles.

The lessons of the suffrage movement can be applied to the movement of today: above all the need to organize masses of women around concrete struggles, to plan campaigns around key issues which can involve the greatest numbers of women.

Through their own experiences in such struggles, masses of Canadian women will learn the answers to such questions as: who are our oppressors? to what degree can this system satisfy the needs of women? who can we depend on as allies in our struggle? and how can we eliminate our oppression?

We need have no fear that the movement will be "bought off" with victory in the abortion issue or any other issue. Victory will only be a spur to the movement — it will give a tremendous impetus to building for future struggles. This is how the feminist movement will be built: through organizing around such concrete issues as abortion law repeal — issues which reach the present level of consciousness of masses of Canadian women and bring them into united struggle.

Today's feminist movement is a vital part of the deepening revolutionary process in this country. Women united in demanding total liberation for their sex will be a powerful force before, during, and after the coming Canadian revolution. And those women will be educated through such struggles as the abortion struggle.

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MacInnis flays Trudeau for hypocrisy on abortion

On Nov 20, demonstrations will be taking place in major centers across Canada demanding repeal of the abortion laws. One of the major actions will be a mass women's assembly in Ottawa to call for abortion on demand. It is sponsored by the broadly-based Ontario Abortion Law Repeal Coalition.

One of the most consistent voices supporting the campaign has been that of Grace MacInnis, (NDP, Vancouver-Kingsway), the only woman MP. Scarcely a day goes by in parliament when she isn't on her feet demanding that the government bring the question of repealing the abortion laws before the house.

And despite the mounting popular support for abortion law repeal (a recent poll by Tory MP Lincoln Alexander in his riding, Hamilton West, found that 63.5 percent favored removing abortion from the Criminal Code), Trudeau and his ministers invariably turn down MacInnis' appeals.

Since her parliamentary interventions have been virtually ignored by the mass media, we are reprinting below the speech she gave Nov. 2. It is taken from the parliamentary record.

MacInnis is sponsor of a private member's bill presently before the house calling for repeal of those sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion. The pro-abortion movement across Canada is circulating a petition in support of this and a similar bill.

Mr. Speaker, in deliberately keeping the matter of abortion from being discussed in the House of Commons, the government is guilty of a series of very unfair and very cruel acts. It is forcing unknown numbers of women to bear unwanted children, with all the terrible consequences to them and to society. It is forcing women on low income to face the horrors of a back street operator or the do-it-yourself procedures which cripple and kill. It is forcing women who can afford it to go to foreign countries for an abortion.

Last year 1,649 Canadian women had to seek such help in New York state. I understand that 44 percent of them were from the province of Quebec alone. It is forcing uncounted other women to run from hospital to hospital in Canada trying desperately to find one that will help them while the clock ticks remorselessly on and the authorities, with eyes averted from their misery, pass by on the other side.

It is permitting those who are opposed to abortion to force their will on the majority in Canada who believe, equally strongly, that abortion should be legalized. All these things are going on while the government washes its hands and refuses to accept responsibility for a situation which it alone can change. Yet last Friday the prime minister told a high school class in Nova Scotia that women should be the ones to decide whether they should have the legal right to have an abortion if they want one. The young folk applauded loudly, quite unaware of the fact that the prime minister is unwilling even to have a debate on abortion in this house this session, as he promised a year ago.

He told the students that he would be very much influenced by the overwhelming feeling of women. He said, "I don't feel I can speak with great authority on this because I am not a woman." Yet when I asked him this afternoon if he would bring in a measure to take abortion from the Criminal Code and allow the elected representatives of the people to vote on it, he completely side-stepped the question. He and his government are the only ones who can bring such a measure before parliament. Why don't they do it?

To have the law as it is now simply means that they are on the side of those who are opposed to abortion and are determined to force that position on everyone else, regardless of what it does to women in every part of Canada. Let there be no mistake about that. I can only hope that this attitude will arouse freedom-loving women and men to bring organized pressure on the government in order to show it how wrong it is.

The forces which today are preventing changes in the abortion law are the same ones who for years were successful in keeping birth control illegal and which will resist government action for effective methods of birth control across Canada. These are the forces responsible for unnecessarily large numbers of abortions. These are the forces causing untold suffering and injustice to thousands of women who should have the right to consult their doctors and seek an abortion safely, legally and openly.

On November 20 a large group of Canadian women are coming to Ottawa to impress upon the government the fact, as the prime minister told the students in Nova Scotia, that women should be the ones to decide whether they should have the legal right to an abortion. I trust that he will give them that opportunity by having a debate on the subject in parliament and then by introducing legislation to take abortion out of the Criminal Code and leaving it, as we leave all other medical procedures, a matter between the patient and her doctor, thus allowing both sides to practice their principles freely without either side trying to force its beliefs on the other.

Why Trudeau stalled the Gray repor

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Ernest Mandel: What is Trotskyism?

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Rallies for right to abortion advance women's struggle

A view of the Nov. 20 abortion repeal demonstration on Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

photo by Arnie Mintz

by Linda Blackwood

A mass women's assembly in Ottawa was the focus for enthusiastic actions across the country Nov. 20 demanding repeal of the anti-abortion laws.

These actions were part of the first international actions held around the issue of abortion and a woman's right to choose.

The rallies were an important step in the campaign and reflected the growing broad support for repeal.

Ontario

OTTAWA — Close to 400 men and women from all over Ontario including Toronto, Hamilton, Peterborough, Windsor, and Kitchener-Waterloo marched from the Supreme Court building to Parliament Hill chanting "Women Unite, Stand Up and Fight, Safe Abortion is Our Right."

Speakers at the rally included Laura Sabia, chairwoman of the National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women, Dr. Harriet Christie of the United Church, Lorna Grant, staff coordinator of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition, and representatives from coalitions in B.C., Manitoba, Quebec and the United States.

Greetings were received from abortion repeal coalitions in many areas. From England came the message "London, Glasgow, Bristol, Liverpool, Nottingham, York and Newcastle, sisters throughout Britain in solidarity November 20th for a woman's right to choose. Greetings to our Canadian sisters."

A feature of the rally following the march was a mock trial which found the Canadian government guilty of causing mental anguish and physical suffering to the women of this country.

Testimonials from a number of women painted a grim picture of the mental and physical suffering Canadian women undergo because of the unjust abortion laws.

Quebec

MONTREAL — Up to 500 men and women marched in Montreal Nov. 20.

The action organized by the Front Commun pour l'Abrogation des lois sur l'avortement and the Women's Coalition for Abortion Law Repeal was the largest women's demonstration ever held in Montreal. Predominantly French, the action was very militant and clearly showed the rapidly growing sentiment among Quebecoises to join the struggles for women's rights.

The demonstration marched through downtown Montreal stopping briefly before Premier Bourassa's office to protest the provincial government's complicity — and the much more acute situation facing Quebecoises as almost no therapeutic abortions are performed in French hospitals in Quebec. The march then continued into two

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New question confronts coalition

Abortion law: toward repeal or reform?

by Joan Newbigging

Over the past months the movement for repeal of the abortion laws has grown considerably. Organizations and individuals with widely divergent views on other issues have united together in abortion law repeal coalitions across Canada.

Their agreement on the need to get rid of the abortion laws and to make sure that any woman who wants an abortion can get one is based on different and often contradictory reasons.

Many would agree with the feminist view that we are fighting for justice for women: for a woman's right to control her body. Some hold that the law prohibiting abortion is unenforceable, causes needless suffering and therefore should be removed. Some see it as a social problem of unwanted children or of overpopulation.

The power of the coalitions stems from the fact that they are uniting together such widely diverse forces into a single movement. But such a broad coalition must be entirely clear on its goal. We must hold firm to the basic concept that brought us together: abortion, a woman's right to choose.

There are many in the coalitions who would be inclined to accept token changes, steps in the right direction, in the belief that these will alleviate the present situation, whereas such concessions may serve only to confuse many activists in the struggle and to undercut it.

This could become a real danger. Already the government is under considerable pressure from the repeal movement. It may well seek to cut across this movement by making some concessions and further "liberalizing" the law. In this situation we have to be just as clear on what we don't want as on what we do want.

This discussion has been raised in the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition around a policy statement adopted by a majority of the OWALRC working committee and presently being circulated within the coalition. The final version as adopted by the coalition will be presented to Justice Minister Turner at a private hearing in Ottawa.

The policy statement flows from a three-pronged policy motion adopted by the Ontario Women's Abortion Action Conference which launched the Ontario coalition. This motion called for repeal of the abortion laws from the Criminal Code, the implementation of federal legislation to ensure a woman's right to abortion, and any further details considered necessary when the legal committee reported back to the coalition. The policy statement under discussion encompasses the legal committee's recommendations.

The contentions part of this statement centers around its detailed projections for new federal legislation. Although the policy of the coalition as a whole is that the federal government should introduce legislation to ensure a woman's right to abortion, it is clear from the discussions in the coalition so far that it would be a mistake to detail this legislation.

The statement specifies that such legislation should provide that abortion be performed only by qualified people, in approved facilities and "up to some outside limit between 12 and 20 weeks of pregnancy." Its intent is to allow for a broad interpretation of qualified people and approved facilities.

The motivation for these proposals is essentially two-fold. Firstly, to ensure that abortion remains within federal jurisdiction after repeal, and thereby to prevent provincial governments from reintroducing in the future laws limiting a woman's access to abortion. Secondly, to appear reasonable and practical.

In opposition to this, the viewpoint has been put forward that such detailed projections should be rejected by the coalition as unnecessary and dangerous; that they cut across the basic principle on which the coalition was built: the right of a woman to choose whether or not to have an abortion.

Specifying the details of new federal legislation on abortion only serves to bring to the fore the differences that exist within the coalition. The various groups and individuals in the coalition stand for different things within the context of repeal; such detailed projections can only divide or limit the coalition.

The central issue the coalition is based on is abortion law repeal. The primary problem women face in trying to get abortions stems from the fact that abortion is a crime. We have united to build the largest possible movement to force the government to remove the abortion laws from the Criminal Code. We must not allow ourselves to get diverted from this goal.

The fundamental problem posed by the policy statement proposals is that, far from ensuring a woman's right to abortion, they would limit it. In this sense, they would cut across the mandate of the Ontario Women's Abortion Action Conference.

It in no way advances our cause to specify that abortions be performed only in approved facilities and by qualified people. It is unclear what the implications of these provisions are. Would abortion remain a crime if performed under other conditions? And if so, who would be the criminal? The woman? As they stand these provisions leave it open for a woman to be victimized if for any reason, such as limited approved facilities or insufficient qualified personnel, she is forced or chooses to obtain an abortion under other conditions.

The provisions are misleading. They would suggest that the problem of illegal abortionists rests either with irresponsible women or with the illegal abortionists themselves, that to legislate against them is to solve the problem. But the problem rests squarely with the government for not providing adequate facilities and adequate qualified personnel.

The proposals concede to the prejudice that abortion is some sort of special medical procedure requiring special laws. We want to get rid of all the misconceptions that there is something different, perhaps unnatural, about abortion. It should be subject to the same regulations as all other medical procedures.

Finally, these provisions in no way solve the problem of pressing the provincial governments to make abortion available to women. Each province would define what was meant by "approved facilities" and "qualified personnel," and could do so in such a way as to sharply limit a woman's right to abortion.

The most dangerous part of the proposals is that limiting a woman's right to abortion to some time between 12 and 20 weeks. These time limits are based on those specified in the

photo by White

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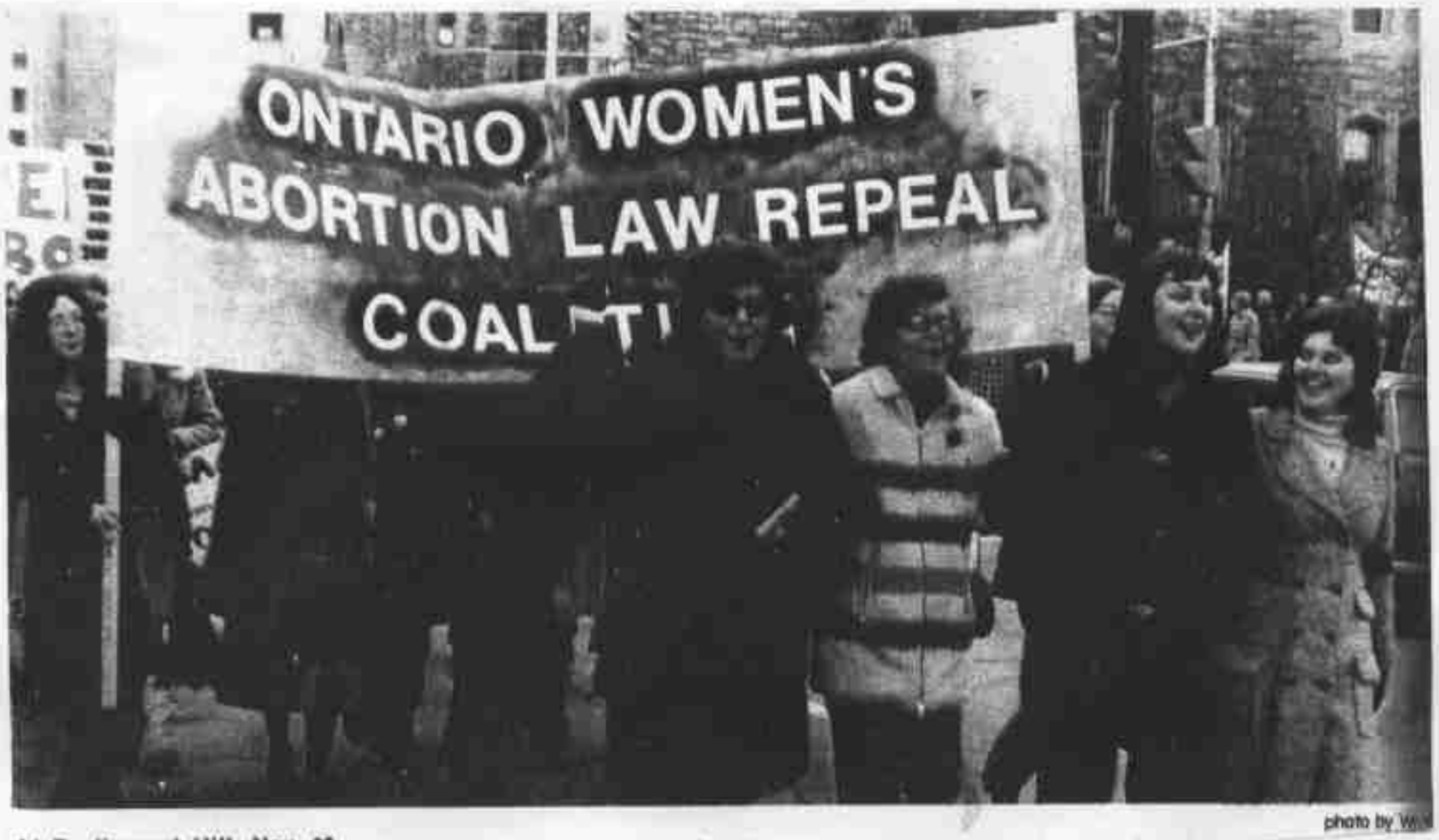
report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the position of the Canadian Medical Association. Essentially they hold that at around that time the fetus becomes viable (achieves some measure of autonomy) and assumes certain rights.

But such time limits are an insult to our dignity as human beings. They say that we are incapable of making responsible decisions about our lives. They mean that after a certain period of pregnancy the state would assume control over our bodies, presumably because at that time we suddenly become irresponsible.

The plays to all sorts of misconceptions about viability. Who can say when a particular stage of pregnancy has been reached? Or define when a fetus has become viable? Some would base their view on religious myths about the soul; others, on the degree to which technology has developed. If scientists were to develop a method of keeping a week-old fertilized egg alive and growing, would abortion at that stage then become a crime?

It would be a grave error for the coalition to take a position on this issue. To do so would be to splinter it. The forces in the coalition are agreed on the need to repeal the abortion laws, on a woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion. They cannot agree on limits on this right.

This debate is a crucial one for the whole abortion repeal movement. Is the movement going to take a clear stand for human justice for women? Is it going to take a forthright stand for our right to choose whether or not to have an abortion? Or is it going to compromise? Is it going to advocate laws which would in fact restrict our right to abortion? Will it even undercut the struggle by leading the movement into a false sense of achievement should the government offer some token concessions? These are among the questions raised in this discussion.



At Parliament Hill, Nov. 20.

photo by W...

... Nov. 20 actions

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halls where rallies, French and English were held. Speakers at the two rallies included representatives from the Quebec NDP, Voice of Women, the Womens Action Movement, the Mouvement pour la Liberation de la Quebecoise, the Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere, and several prominent individuals including Dr. Henry Morgentaler, a doctor now under indictment for performing abortions.

The demonstration had originally been planned to march to the criminal court but were denied this right under Drapeau's unconstitutional by-law which prohibited demonstrations in that sector of the city. A delegation of four women carried a symbolic action to the Criminal Court where they laid a wreath reading "death to the abortion laws."

The Front Commun organized a very successful cultural benefit on the Friday night prior to the demonstrations. It featured five top Quebec "artistes" including Pauline Julien and Yvon Deschamps.

B.C.

VANCOUVER — One hundred and fifty people marched through downtown Vancouver chanting "Join the march, join the fight, abortion is our right." Supporters of the march included the B.C. Family Planning Association, Vancouver and District Labor Council, and the Burrard YWCA. Speakers at the rally included representatives from the United Church and the High School Birth Control Rights Committee.

Alberta

EDMONTON — Seventy-five people marched to the provincial legilature and presented a brief to the government.

Saskatchewan

REGINA — In a spirited rally inside the provincial legislature, 75 men and women presented a brief to the NDP Minister of Labor and Welfare. The minister told the demonstrators that a committee was studying the question of abortion. Over 40 people came by chartered bus from Saskatoon for the action.

Manitoba

WINNIPEG — A teach-in at the University of Manitoba attracted over 200 students to a lively debate. Most of the students were sympathetic to the panelists who spoke in favor of repeal. On Nov. 20, 50 women marched to the Legislature to present a brief to a representative of the federal government.

International

The largest demonstration for the right to abortion took place in Paris where 5,000 people demonstrated against the "condition of women in society" and against the abortion laws. With cries of "Work, family, country, enough" and of "Free abortion and contraception on demand," the cortege took on an atmosphere of a street festival. Among the demonstrators was Simone de Beauvoir.

In the United States, over 6,000 women marched in Washington and San Francisco in the first feminist march since 1913 when women demonstrated for the right to vote in Washington, D.C. The marches were loud and spirited. In Washington the chant was "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide" and "One, two three, four, we want abortions — not war."

In San Francisco, the sight of thousands of women and men demonstrating for abortion law repeal evoked many responses from onlookers, most of which were very favorable.

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EDITORIAL

Abortion on demand is focus for feminists

The Nov. 20 actions across the country clearly demonstrated two things: the dynamism of the abortion law repeal campaign, and the importance of abortion as the issue around which opposition to the women's liberation struggle is mobilizing.

Abortion has become a red-hot issue in Canadian politics. Controversy on abortion hits the media almost every day. Recently Trudeau and Justice Minister Turner have made statements in which they personally pulled back from their previous unyielding opposition to abortion law repeal, thus indicating the pressure they feel on this explosive question.

They have started to respond with words but not with deeds — they still arrogantly refuse to hold the promised debate on this question in the House, far less introduce a government motion to remove the abortion laws from the Criminal Code.

The Nov. 20 actions for abortion law repeal, although smaller than we have come to expect in movements with a longer history like the antiwar movement, were the largest actions for abortion law repeal ever held in Canada. Not only that: these actions were built by coalitions uniting broader layers of women in action against the government than have fought for *any* women's issue since the days of the suffrage movement.

The conferences and meetings held across the country in October, which brought these forces together and launched the repeal campaign, were united around the concept that every woman should have the right to choose whether or not to have a child.

In response, anti-abortion forces — with such powerful support as the Catholic Church — have been marshalling for attack. Using vicious, manipulative tactics such as displaying pictures of fully developed fetuses to make women feel guilty about abortion, these groups feed on every prejudice, every fear and religious misconception to extend their influence and build opposition to the repeal struggle. The focus of their attack is to deny that women have any rights in regard to pregnancy and birth.

Of greatest concern to feminists is the fact that anti-abortion forces have extended their influence into the New Democratic Party, the only major political party with a program for women's rights. Leaders of the Manitoba NDP, including Premier Ed Schreyer, intervened to prevent the recent provincial convention from supporting repeal. Speaking to a Toronto riding meeting, Stephen Lewis claimed that the Ontario NDP's support of abortion law repeal was a factor in the party's recent election defeat — despite the mass of evidence that a clear majority of Canadians, much greater than the number who support the NDP, now support repeal.

These ominous developments show that despite the federal NDP's support of repeal, and despite MP Grace MacInnis' constant campaigning in parliament, feminists in the NDP will have to be continually vigilant and step up their work to bring all levels of the party into full support of the campaign.

The abortion struggle is more than a fight for a key reform: it has become the battleground for the struggle between feminism and those forces working to maintain women's oppression. Feminists must maintain the initiative, must consolidate and extend the forces organized in the repeal campaign, through building the next actions mapped out by the fall conferences.

The petition to support Grace MacInnis' bill for abortion law repeal (and a similar bill presented by Liberal MP Hylliard Chappell) has already gathered 15,000 signatures across the country. This petition can have an immense impact on the country, translating massive support for repeal into a concrete movement. And every signer is a potential organizer for the campaign.

Petition campaigns have an honorable history among Canadian women. Suffragists used petitions as an effective organizing vehicle, often travelling long distances to sign up rural women and win their support.

The campaign to hold — and win — student referendums on repeal will be an extremely important framework for educating the entire student body on abortion and why it must be a woman's right. The referendums can be closely interlocked with the petition, each building the other.

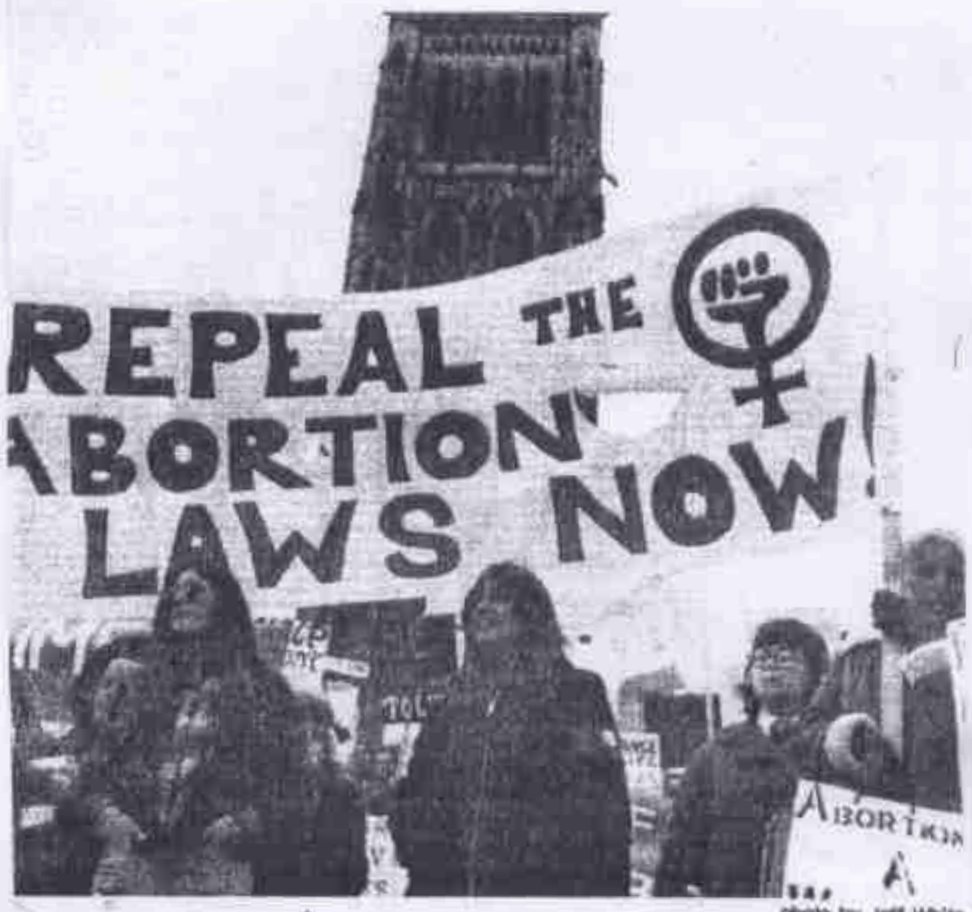

photo by Jeff White

OTTAWA, NOV. 20. Women rally in front of Parliament to demand the repeal of abortion laws.

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Feminism and the struggle for abortion law repeal

The following is from a speech by Joan Newbigging to the Ontario Socialist Educational Conference Dec. 31, 1971. Newbigging is a leader of the League for Socialist Action-Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere and a participant in the feminist movement. She co-authored the LSA. LSO brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1968 and is currently active in the Manitoba Abortion Action Coalition.

photo by Jeff White

Joan Newbigging

1971 was quite a year for women.

This was the year when women in Switzerland voted for the first time, when the first women entered the priesthood of the Anglican Church.

1971 was the year the Quebec Government was dragged part way into the 20th century. A number of bills were passed in Quebec enabling women to act as jurors, to drink draft beer in certain pubs, and enabling married women to own property, sign contracts and so on for the first time.

There was a higher proportion of women in the work force in 1971 than in any year since World War II. The Ontario government passed the Women's Equal Opportunity Act, striking a blow against the discrimination working women face on the basis of sex, marital status and pregnancy. The federal government amended the Unemployment Insurance Act to enable women to receive payments during maternity leave. The issue of women in the work force dominated the 1971 convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

1971 unquestionably saw more books published on women and women's liberation than ever before. It saw women's studies courses flourish on campuses across Canada.

On March 6 in London, England, some 4,000 women demonstrated for equal pay, free nurseries and the right to abortion. On March 15, hundreds of Filipino women marched through the streets of Manila to demand equality. International demonstrations were held for the right to abortion. Hundreds of prominent women in France and Germany challenged laws against abortion by signing a statement that they had had illegal abortions.

All these developments were in some way or another products of the women's liberation movement — of its militancy, its determination, its sense of sisterhood. The growth of this movement has created an atmosphere which is making it all the more possible for women to challenge the restrictions that are imposed on them and to fight the discrimination they face.

The fight for abortion

1971 was above all the year of the fight for legal abortion. Around the world, women confronted governments to demand they end the situation of enforced motherhood and grant women the right to control their own bodies.

This struggle, which will become an even bigger issue in 1972, has propelled the whole feminist movement forward. It has shown the power of women, their single-minded determination to fight for their liberation.

It is around this issue that feminists have gone beyond words to action, from discussions to struggle. It is around this issue that they are reaching out to thousands of new women and are starting to mobilize them in the fight for their liberation. It is by focusing on this issue that women are building a massive movement that challenges the very foundations of this society.

In response, the enemies of this movement have regrouped and counterattacked with increased vigor. It is in this clash, in this battle, that the women's liberation movement is being forged today.

We women are struggling for repeal of the abortion laws, for abortion on demand, above all because this represents our right to control our own bodies and our own lives. It means that we can decide for ourselves when and if we will bear a child: not the state, not the courts, not the police, not the church.

It means the elimination of laws that are used to torture, mutilate, humiliate, exploit and kill those of us who seek to exercise that right today. It means an end to backstreet abortionists, an end to having to beg before hospital abortion committees, an end to visits to exorbitantly-priced U.S. abortion clinics, an end to bearing unwanted children.

We want to decide for ourselves when and if to have an abortion; we want the abortion laws repealed from the Criminal Code.

The widespread support for this demand is unquestionable. It has been shown in the increasing numbers of organizations that have taken a stand for repeal, in the poll taken recently in Hamilton MP Lincoln Alexander's riding which showed 63.5 percent supported repeal, in the response obtained already to the petition campaign for repeal.

The impact of the movement has already been demonstrated in a number of ways. Controversy on this issue hits the press almost every day. Hospital abortion committees now feel compelled to ratify more abortions; in the last six months, 150 percent more abortions were performed through these committees.

Government spokesmen who a year ago were mouthing platitudes about the sanctity of the fetus, have now changed their tune. Their position today, as outlined by such figures as Justice Minister Turner and Supply Minister Richardson, is that there are powerful arguments on both sides and that this should be a matter of individual conscience. At the same time they are still refusing to debate this issue in the House, far less move towards repealing the laws.

In this situation the primary challenge before the repeal movement remains to translate this sentiment into a powerful

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movement which will force the government to act. The main ways we will do this are through building the petition campaign and the referendums for repeal on campuses across the country. Both these campaigns are designed to confront and involve hundreds and thousands of people, to bring mass pressure to bear on the government.

Opposition to women

There is a powerful array of forces lined up against us on this issue. There is the government, the Catholic church with its mighty resources, the Right to Life Committees, the Friends of the Fetus, and all the reactionary forces in society which are subsidizing and promoting them.

All these elements stand for the status quo, for the continued oppression of women. They have some understanding of the dynamic of the struggle for the repeal of the abortion laws, of the importance of maintaining the situation whereby women cannot begin to control their lives. That is why they are such inveterate enemies of the repeal movement.

When that notorious Toronto tailor, John Bulloch, pour thousands of dollars into ads in the Globe and Mail, with pictures of alleged fetuses and morbid stories about the "destruction of life," it's not the fetuses he's concerned about. It's all the immigrant women he employs as cheap labor in his sweatshops. He wants them to be submissive, dependent and undemanding. And he sees the threat to this, once women have won the right to abortion, once they have control over their own lives.

Our inability to control our pregnancies is one of the key instruments of our oppression. And the government and all those supporters of the status quo — a status quo that murders women — know this.

It is this that has provided the basic rationale for discrimination against us at work and in the educational system. How many times have we been told that it's not worth-while training us because we're just going to have children? How many times have we been told it's not worth while promoting us because we'll just go and get pregnant?

photo

As long as we are continually blackmailed by our bodies we cannot begin to take control of our destinies. And yet the means to do this exist. We are within sight of safe, effective birth control. Right now abortion is already a simple, safe operation. And yet women are forced to turn their bodies over to butchers or to bear children they don't want.

The reason? The rulers of this country want to keep us oppressed. Winning the right to abortion will strike a mighty blow to the myth that is fundamental to the oppression of women — that biology is destiny.

Biology is not destiny

This victory will strike a blow against the role of women as simply childbearer and child rearer, the bearer of her husband's children, his helpmate, his sex object. It will give us an independent and dignity we have not known since the birth of class society.

This is why it has become such an important struggle for women.

The abortion repeal struggle is developing in a period of deepening radicalization, when the national struggle in Quebec is on the rise, opposition to U.S. domination of Canada is growing, revulsion at the exploits of U.S. imperialism around the world is increasing, the revolt of youth is deepening.

All these movements, as they grow, are discovering the power of mass actions, of mass demonstrations in the streets. They are also finding a reflection in the NDP. This party has emerged on the federal level as a consistent champion of abortion law repeal, as most effectively expressed through the efforts of Grace MacInnis.

As this overall radicalization deepens, it has a far-reaching dynamic. Each struggle as it grows starts to challenge some of the basic features of Canadian society today — the oppression of national minorities, the family as we know it, the domination of the economy by large monopolies — and becomes all the more clearly anticapitalist in its direction. These movements are organizing and educating growing numbers of Canadians around the injustices they face. They are mobilizing the forces that will carry out the socialist revolution.

The main opposition to the struggle for abortion has come from the staunchest supporters of the oppression of women.

However it's not only from these right-wingers that the abortion repeal movement is being attacked, it's also from people who claim to speak from the left, or from the feminist movement.

Once women become conscious of how we are oppressed, we become increasingly sensitized to all the manifestations of this oppression. We start to see how widespread it is, how deeply entrenched, how its myriad expressions reach into every aspect of society. Such a realization can become paralyzing — how do you start to fight such a pervasive network of injustice?

How to fight oppression

Several responses have been given to this question, four of which I want to touch on. One viewpoint would identify men as our enemy and would seek to build some sort of alternative subculture without them within the framework of capitalist society. Another would argue that these injustices are mere aberrations on a system that is basically sound; that we must work with those in power — within the Liberal or Conservative parties — to gradually eliminate them.

Both these viewpoints fail to come to grips with the fact that the oppression of women is rooted in the very structure of capitalism and that in the long run it can only be overcome by radically restructuring society.

A further viewpoint holds that the task at this time is to study, discuss and understand; that we should put our energies solely into organizing women's studies courses on campuses or into building small consciousness-raising groups. Such activities are unquestionably important in building the feminist movement — in reaching out to women, in researching our past, in deepening our understanding of our situation today. Yet at the same time we must go beyond them. The task before the women's liberation movement is not only to aid us in understanding our oppression but also to organize women to fight against it. That is precisely what the movement for legal abortion is doing.

Finally there is a viewpoint held by some groups calling themselves socialist. Essentially the proponents of this view warn us of the dangers of dividing the working class by building an independent feminist movement and tell us to rely on them and on the socialist revolution for our liberation. This sterile view fails to recognize the reality of how a revolution is made — that in the process of struggling against the injustices they face as women women will be won to the socialist movement.

The main view I want to discuss has many proponents among groups calling themselves socialist. It was in large part put forward by the Canadian Party of Labor in a leaflet distributed at the Nov. 20 abortion repeal demonstration in Ottawa.

Essentially there are three parts to it. Firstly, they challenge that abortion is an issue that affects working class women. Secondly, they argue that repeal is reformist and that it is wrong to raise this demand by itself; they challenge the single issue character of the repeal movement. Thirdly, they make the case against uniting with women from different class backgrounds; they challenge the broad

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coalitions that are being built around this issue.

1. The abortion repeal issue does not affect working class women. At first this argument seems so ridiculous that it's not worth debating. Who are being mutilated at the hands of hack abortionists? Who are bearing unwanted children? Upper class women? Petty-bourgeois intellectuals? No, in large numbers they are working class women, whether they are workers or housewives or students. In fact they are the prime victims of the laws as they now stand; they have the greatest difficulty in raising the exorbitant funds required for a safe illegal abortion in Canada or a visit to a New York clinic.

Two misconceptions lie behind this view. Firstly the concept that the struggle for abortion law repeal is for purely sexual liberation, with the connotation that this is frivolous and petty bourgeois. Secondly the concept that the problem, as it affects working class women, is not so much to provide the right to abortion as to provide the conditions that will enable them to raise their children adequately. There is an element of truth in this in so far as many people do not have children because these conditions — childcare, adequate housing, etc. — are not available. But both concepts betray a misunderstanding of the main point of the struggle for repeal; in that we women are fighting for the right to choose for ourselves whether or not to bear children, the right to enjoy a full sexual life without the constant fear of pregnancy, the right to decide what to do with our own lives. We are fighting for these rights for all women.

2. It is wrong to raise the abortion repeal demand by itself. Here it is argued that this demand is purely reformist; that it doesn't hit out against any of the underpinnings of woman's oppression; that unless it is raised within the context of other demands, such as for free 24-hour childcare, against discrimination at work, it will divert the struggle and fail to raise women's consciousness as to the class roots of their oppression.

In response to this argument, we have stressed that, of course, abortion law repeal is a reform, but it is one with profound implications. Winning it will pull one of the main props out of the myth of the inferiority of women.

Thousands of women with differing views on other issues are starting to unite in struggle against the government for this single demand. They are going through a rich political experience together, gaining confidence in themselves and getting a feeling of their strength. They are setting a process in motion which will not end with the winning of this right, but which will continue on to fight other injustices, and which will bring increasing numbers of women to feminist and socialist conclusions.

3. It is wrong to build a broad coalition encompassing women from different class backgrounds. These women we are told,

photo by Jeff White

have nothing in common with us. They are our enemies.

This view springs from an incorrect analysis of women's oppression, from a belief that it is basically only economic in character, that only working class women, in their capacity as wage earners or wives of wage earners, are oppressed. It fails to come to grips with the role that the family plays as the cornerstone of our oppression.

All women are victims of a society which, through this unit, relegates them to the role of childbearer and child-rearer and to economic dependency. From birth it moulds and stifles them so that they will meekly play out this limited role.

The power of the feminist movement rests in large part in the fact that it has the potential to reach out to all women, regardless of their class background, and draw them into action against the economic, social and sexual oppression they suffer.

We have nothing to fear from such a movement. Rather we welcome it; the broader the abortion law repeal struggle becomes and the more women it encompasses, the more powerful it becomes. As socialists we want to immerse ourselves in this movement, to participate in its experiences, to build it, to lead women to revolutionary conclusions.

Some women within the women's liberation movement itself have also expressed hesitations about the abortion movement. They express a fear that the abortion repeal struggle is a diversion from the "real" struggle for women's liberation; that if this movement were at a higher level, it would be organizing around other facets of our oppression.

But the abortion repeal struggle is in no way a diversion — the right to abortion, to control our bodies, is in fact a crucial step towards our liberation. Moreover, this is an issue that growing numbers of Canadian women see as the one of primary concern to them. It would be wrong for the feminist movement to cut itself off from this ferment, to abdicate the responsibility of leading the struggle for this basic human right.

Mass feminist movement

Far from being an indication of the low level of the feminist movement, this is an indication of its growing sophistication. It shows that feminists are developing an appreciation of how we can reach out to more and more women, how we can build a powerful movement, how we can win victories.

A powerful campaign can be built on this question which can involve thousands of women. It can show women how to force the government to make concessions. In this sense the abortion repeal campaign can be a profound consciousness-raising experience — giving women insight into the source of our oppression and, above all, giving us a concept of what type of struggle it will be necessary to wage to win our liberation. It will set a far-reaching precedent for the campaigns we will wage in the future.

In our view the primary challenge before feminists is to build a mass feminist movement, to reach out to as many women as possible and to involve them in struggle against the injustices they face; to build a strong a force for social change as possible.

This can only be done by organizing around issues that are of immediate concern to women; that speak to their needs, problems and hopes. Today, this means struggling for the repeal of the abortion laws.

About 60 years ago our foresisters waged a campaign here in Canada for the right to vote. They took it into towns, villages, farm communties, urban centers right across Canada. They went by foot, by buggy, by whatever means were available. They petitioned, argued, persuaded, harangued. They built a strong movement and they achieved their goal.

We will do the same. And our victory on the issue of abortion law repeal will mark the first step in our struggle. With the lessons we learn from it, we will fight on against the other injustices we face — until we have uprooted the whole system that breeds these injustices.

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Fight Ottawa anti-abortion injunction

Call emergency conference for abortion law repeal

A call for a cross-country emergency conference of women for abortion law repeal has been launched by pro-abortion coalitions in seven provinces. The initiative has come from the Manitoba Abortion Coalition which will host the conference in Winnipeg March 18-19.

The following are excerpts from the call:

The recent Ontario Supreme Court injunction, which halted an abortion at Riverside Hospital in Ottawa at the husband's request, is a blatant assault on the rights of all Canadian women and a direct attack on the abortion movement.

This is not an isolated incident; it follows a New York Supreme Court injunction which attempted to halt all abortions in New York civic hospitals. These actions are a response on the part of the most backward elements in this society to the growing influence and strength of the movement for repeal of the abortion laws; to our growing confidence that we as women can win the right to choose for ourselves when and if we will bear children. . .

In the face of the constantly growing mass support, the government of Canada has refused to act. . .The prime Minister. . .continues to ignore the mass movement for repeal that is growing across the country — a movement to ensure that every child is a wanted child and every mother is a willing mother.

In the face of the government's inaction and the mounting attacks on the abortion law repeal movement, we must join together to show the government of Canada that we will redouble our efforts to remove all abortion laws from the criminal code. . .

For information on the conference, contact the Manitoba coalition at: **315B - 416 Main Street, Winnipeg, Man. [204] 943-2793.**

by Kate Alderdice

FEB. 7 — An Ottawa woman whose attempt to get an abortion was halted by a court injunction Jan. 27 has decided to fight the ruling.

The injunction was issued on behalf of the woman's husband and the "infant plaintiff," represented by lawyer David Dehler, a member of the anti-abortion organization, Alliance for Life. It was immediately replied to through protests right across Canada by women fighting for removal of all anti-abortion laws from the Criminal Code.

Abortion law repeal coalitions in seven provinces have issued a call for an emergency national conference to be held in Winnipeg March 18-19 to respond to these attacks on the movement for abortion on demand.

This kind of support was undoubtedly an important factor in the woman's decision to appeal the injunction.

The injunction is the latest move in the campaign by right-wing church and pro-government forces to prevent women from having access to safe legal abortion, and therefore from having any effective control over their lives. The decision is all the more outrageous since the abortion had already been approved by a hospital Therapeutic Abortion Committee. The woman's doctor had warned her that continuation of the pregnancy could endanger her own life, and possibly result in the birth of a deformed child. She is already the mother of four children.

The injunction raises the possibility that a woman's husband, or any third party, may intervene to

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... Protest injunction

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have an abortion halted even though the woman wants it and it has been approved by a hospital committee. As such, it constitutes an attack on even the present laws which are very restrictive.

It is precisely the existence of such laws, which give the final decision to doctors, hospital committees, and anybody except the woman involved, — which open the door to legal attacks like the Ottawa injunction.

This incident points up more than ever before the need to step up the campaign for removal of the abortion laws from the Criminal Code altogether. This will make it possible for the woman involved to have the right to choose whether or not she wants to bear a child, and once and for all take this most personal decision out of the hands of male doctors, legislators and priests.

Although there were some attempts to pass off the Ottawa judgment as "a private family matter" it is clearly a frontal attack on the rights of all women. A spokesman for the federal Justice Department said the decision "really is a precedent" and rushed out to get his own copy of the decision.

The lawyer who obtained the injunction David Dehler called the ruling "a first step in Canada." "The next step," he crowed triumphantly, "is to have a guardian appointed for all unborn children in Ontario." Mr. Dehler hopes to have this honor himself.

The injunction comes at a time when the Catholic Women's League is stepping up its letter-writing campaign and anti-abortion organizations are moving into the high schools and campuses. A new blow at the abortion law repeal movement is the editorial in the February issue of the United Church Observer, which calls on the church's General Council to reverse its position, adopted in January, 1971, that abortion ought to be a "private matter between a woman and her doctor."

The Ottawa injunction and the other moves in the anti-abortion campaign also buttress the Trudeau government's continued refusal to abolish the present law.

Trudeau will argue he is pursuing a moderate course between the "extremists" of both anti-and pro-abortion forces. In reality, the present laws are a reactionary violation of the basic human rights of women. This is an election year and the abortion law repeal movement is not going to let Trudeau get away with it.

Within 24 hours after the issuing of the Ottawa injunction, the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition had issued a statement to the press and organized a protest demonstration of 100 women and men outside the Ontario Supreme Court building in Toronto.

Lorna Grant; coordinator for the Ontario Coalition, called the decision to grant the injunction "the most horrifying injustice possible. It is as if the court had reached right inside her womb and made a ruling on her body. As long as the courts can enforce motherhood, no woman is safe. We stand by the watchword: Every child a wanted child, every mother a willing mother. All this talk about the "rights" of fetuses and husbands is just a cover-up for denying women their most basic rights."

photo by Jeff White

Women protest anti-abortion injunction outside the Ontario Supreme Court building in Toronto.

Greetings were sent to the Ontario demonstration by the newly-formed Nova Scotia Coalition for Repeal of the Abortion Laws and the Nova Scotia Conference of Women taking place the same weekend as the demonstration. Protest actions were organized in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Ottawa. In Vancouver, the B.C. Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition held a press conference to protest the injunction at which Grace MacInnis, NDP MP and the only woman in the House of Commons, spoke.

In Ottawa, the Abortion Law Repeal Coalition, Carleton University Women's Liberation and the Young Socialists organized a demonstration outside the Supreme Court of Canada building, followed by a march through downtown streets. An organizer, Diane Palm, said the ruling "set a really dangerous precedent" and maintained that "repeal of all abortion laws was the only certain solution to the problem." A series of other actions is planned, including a referendum of Carleton University students on the abortion issue.

Following the Toronto demonstration, the Ontario Coalition called an emergency planning meeting attended by 70 women to discuss ways to step up the campaign to repeal the abortion laws in face of the injunction. Two organizing tours were projected, one of southern Ontario and one to go across Canada building support for the repeal movement.

The meting also discussed the projected Canada-wide conference to be held in Winnipeg, March 18-19. One important purpose of the conference is to unify the forces across the country that are fighting for repeal of the abortion laws and work out some kind of common strategy.

Under discussion will be the referendums taking place on various university campuses on the question of repealing the laws; how women can inject the issue of abortion into the upcoming federal election and force candidates to make their position known and the cross-Canada organization of the petition campaign which is already underway.

The petition, which has already received thousands of signatures, calls on the federal government to repeal those sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion. It will be presented to the government some time this spring.

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Ultralefts abandon abortion repeal struggle

by Brenda Zannis

MONTREAL — The vicious attack on every woman's right to abortion in Canada has claimed some of its first victims in the feminist movement.

Before an audience of 800 McGill University students here Jan. 31, Marlene Dixon, a sociology professor and former feminist, attacked the women's liberation movement for its focus on the abortion issue.

This attack was echoed by two of the other three panelists at the first session of a week-long McGill conference on women,

It was warmly greeted by many men in the audience who rose to attack those "women's libbers" who are so selfishly concerned with their own needs. The daily papers across the country also played up the attack in items with titles like "Professor quits women's lib."

Dixon launched an all-out attack on the women's liberation movement but focused much of her fire on the movement for abortion. She made the incredible statement that the campaign for abortion is "all wrong" because people talk too much about abortion and not about what leads the woman to the "agonizing decision in the first place to kill the child she carries."

This statement was made on the heels of the first Canadian court action that purported to act on behalf of the "infant plaintiff" to save "his life."

The main problem with the women's movement, Dixon claimed, is that it has become primarily defined by the campaign for abortion. According to her, more important issues such as medicare, housing, transportation, child care, education, are not being dealt with because of the emphasis on abortion.

Another panelist, Donna Cherniak, co-author of the McGill Birth Control Handbook, a pamphlet used by pro-abortion activists across the country, also attacked the abortion movement adding that women shouldn't fight for legal abortion because it is simply a reform and, if won, might be taken away again by the ruling class at any time.

These arguments, although they come from women of the left, accept the basic reactionary arguments against a woman's right to abortion — that abortion is murder; that abortion is not really important to women, only a few frustrated females are making a big stink about it while the average woman is satisfied with state-enforced motherhood; and that changes are won and secured not by mass movements of people demanding their rights, but solely by the lawmakers.

But the real significance of the abortion law repeal movement was described by the one panelist who did defend the feminist movement, Evelyn Reed.

A Marxist anthropologist and leading spokeswoman of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, Reed provoked the debate by leading off the panel discussion with an analysis of the present stage of the feminist movement.

She compared the movement of today with the first feminist wave. Today women's struggle is on a higher level, she said, because now women are demanding control of their bodies and lives. In this they are directly challenging the capitalist structures and the major institutions upholding them.

Reed pointed out that this sexist class society uses women's biology to force women into domestic servitude, making us economically dependent on individual men. Then society turns around and says that we are limited, not by society itself, but by our biological nature.

Since lack of control over our bodies is central to the oppression of women, it is understandable that women have come to see the struggle for abortion as central to the struggle for their liberation.

And she projected that the feminist movement would be built by mass action around specific demands such as abortion on demand.

Women in the audience also rose to defend their struggle, and to speak of the need to respond to attacks on every woman's basic right to control her body. But the discussion period was dominated by the men, who not only spoke one after another, they booed and heckled loudly all the women who defended the feminist struggle.

Although the Monday night meeting launched an attack on the struggle for abortion it was not indicative of the real sentiment at McGill. The following Thursday, a meeting of 200 came out firmly behind the movement for abortion. A small group of ultralefts who had sided with the right wing at the Monday meeting, didn't gain any sympahty for their anti-woman positions from the Thursday audience. The meeting made a strong appeal for a united campaign to eliminate all laws which stand in the way of a woman's right to abortion.

EVELYN REED. "Abortion is key issue for women."

MARLENE DIXON. "Feminism is dead."

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Conference to unite abortion campaign

by Lis Angus

The first cross-country abortion conference, to be held in Winnipeg March 18-19 brings together women from Halifax to Victoria to map out aco-ordinated strategy to win repeal of Canada's restrictive abortion laws. This conference will weld together the diverse groups and individual women fighting for repeal in every part of this country.

The fact that we are able to organize on this scale is no small accomplishment. Women in our society are traditionally socialized in the opposite direction, away from organizing against our oppression. We are taught to expect competition, mistrust and divisions among women; our conditioning leads us to put others' needs before our own, to passively accept our restricted lives.

Yet we have been able to overcome some of that conditioning. We have learned to recognize that without uniting our efforts we are powerless. Our only strength lies in fighting together as women.

This important lesson was one our feminist foremothers learned in their struggle to force an adamant government to grant them the vote. It was buried in conservative reaction which stilled all protest — including the feminist movement — in the 1920s. Only recently, out of our experiences as part of the second wave of feminism, have we regained our recognition of the necessity of an organized women's movement.

The struggle which is teaching us most forcefully the necessity of a strong movement, is the struggle to remove abortion from the Criminal Code.

It is no accident that abortion has become the focus of women's struggles to control our own lives. The right to legal abortion involves the most fundamental rights of women — to control our own bodies, to remove from the state the prerogative of forcing motherhood on us.

Many of the inequities we face in education and at work are rationalized on the premise that we may become pregnant at any time, that this is beyond our control. These inequities are experienced most sharply by working class women, whose access to abortion is also most severely limited.

Opponents of women's rights to organize, particularly the government and the Catholic church, have recognized the importance of this issue. In response to the growing strength of the movement for repeal, these forces have launched a series of vicious attacks on that campaign and against women's rights to abortion.

Abortion has become a big issue in Canadian politics. The news media touch on the debates surrounding the campaign almost daily.

In the process of building the abortion law repeal movement over the past few years, we have been learning concretely how to struggle — how to organize to win victories for women.

In 1969, when the first small women's liberation groups formed in Canada, we had no experience in how to organize or what to organize around.

One group, the Vancouver Women's Caucus, moved out boldly to organize women around repeal of

photo by Jeff White

... Winnipeg abortion conference

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the abortion laws — and met with phenomenal response. The VWC in 1970 led an Abortion Caravan across the country, stopping to speak to meetings of women in every city, to confront the government in Ottawa with a crowd of 600 women calling for repeal and "free abortion on demand."

Some of these women chained themselves to the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons, giving speeches on the right to abortion until they were removed by guards.

The response to this audacious action revealed clearly that here was an issue women right across the country had come alive to. They were obviously ready to act on it.

The hearings of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, held across Canada in 1968, had already indicated that denial of abortion rights was a key issue to many women. The caravan made the sentiment for abortion on demand a central fact in Canadian politics.

At the same time, a strong opposition to women's rights began to crystallize around the abortion issue. The sentiment for each woman's right to abortion continued to deepen following the caravan action. More and more women began organizing around abortion — most of them within organizations they already belonged to. In response to this pressure, many groups like the conservative Canadian Medical Association took a stand for repeal of the laws.

A number of organized actions such as the Feb. 13 march on Ottawa against the government's inactivity were held in the following months. But the use of the slogan "free abortion on demand" as the central slogan of the campaign was found to limit the scope of the campaign.

Through organizing together in common action, we had learned the importance of formulating demands capable of mobilizing the broadest masses of women in struggle around a central issue. With this in mind, the movement changed its central demand to "repeal of all abortion laws," which proved to be a clearer demand and one more able to unite broad forces behind the campaign.

By the fall of 1971, provincial abortion law repeal coalitions had been organized in seven provinces. These coalitions united the scattered struggles against restrictive abortion laws into one campaign; they brought together far broader layers of women than ever before in the common struggle against these laws. We began the process of learning how to unite in action despite differences on many other issues.

The Winnipeg conference comes out of all our experiences of the last two years. The conference will meet the task of uniting these provincial coalitions into a co-ordinated cross-country coalition which can fight the battles of the campaign with the greatest possible strength.

This process of learning how to organize, how to reach out and win support for our struggle, is a continuation of the fight begun by our feminist foremothers. It is a process that will not end as long as women are oppressed.

MAY 9, 1970. Cross-Canada "Abortion Caravan" culminated in a mass demonstration for women's right to abortion on Parliament Hill.

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A woman replies to Trudeau

Who's to judge? No one but us!

by Jacquie Henderson

From now on I think it would be wise, Trudeau, to have your security guards check those women for lethal weapons before allowing them to come close enough to kiss you. Since you've made it clear your kiss is the kiss of death a lot of us are fighting mad.

It happened last week when one of our sisters from Sault Ste. Marie asked you a question. She asked how long the government planned to turn its back on the health and welfare of Canadian women and if we could expect any action from the government to repeal the abortion laws.

You began as always by ignoring the question. But after you lectured for awhile on the merit of various slogans, you came out with it: Abortion is killing. The crude justification for denying women the right to abortion used by all the most reactionary elements in this society.

None of them are ever very seriously concerned about the life or rights of the fetuses they claim to be spokesmen for. Their concern, your concern Mr. Trudeau, is for denying women their most basic rights. It's not that you really consider the fetus a human being, is it? It's just that you don't really consider women human beings.

I think you made that clear, Trudeau.

You say you stand on the side of life against death in the case of doubt. What hypocrisy! There is no doubt that abortion is a life and death question. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women estimates that 1,000 women each year are maimed or killed as a result of illegal abortions. Thousands more are admitted for post-abortion repairs through the back door of hospitals that refuse to admit them through the front door for legal abortions.

And yet you didn't comment on this murder of women. Instead you philosophized about the "killing" of a clump of cells.

But not all killing is bad, you tell us. Some can be justified in legal and moral code. You mean like the killing of women by criminal laws, we ask? Like wars, you explain. Or hanging. This callous cynicism must certainly win for you the prize for being the lowest sort of women hater, Trudeau.

You tell us we must be able to justify our "killing." And with an absurd logic you compare abortion to a situation where you yourself might kill in self-defense. And just as you would have to answer to the courts, "if a mother kills her child, or a doctor kills a fetus . . . she must answer for it."

But, who is talking of killing children? As far as we can see from your lack of action in response to the demand for day care, you aren't any more interested in the welfare of children than you are in that of women. A fetus is not a child. And all your words will not make it one.

A child like a woman should have some rights — the right to be a wanted child, not a product of state-enforced motherhood.

And who should the woman answer to? You, Mr. Trudeau? Are you going to judge on all our cases like a Roman patrician over the lives of his slaves? Or is it the present hospital boards composed of honorable men who never even see the women involved; who pass judgment on the basis of how good a story the woman has, on how prominent a psychiatrist she has to speak for her; who demand women prove they are incompetent and insane and then keep them waiting in suspense for weeks only to turn down many.

Women should be denied the most basic human rights by your logic. We have fewer rights than the insane or senile. We are assumed irresponsible until we can prove ourselves responsible.

You have used the prestige of your position as prime minister to put forward this scandalous view. Just as your government has used its power to maintain the present murderous abortion laws against the wishes of the population.

But at least you've finally said where you stand. No more double-talk like: "It's up to the women of this country" when you know damn well it's your laws which prevent women from making even the most basic decisions over their own lives. No more promises to take up abortion in the House and maybe do something on it. You've been doing that for years.

And some of us had some illusions about you because of it. Oh, we've known you're not exactly a champion of women's rights, but perhaps if we spoke to you in the right way. Your party has its conferences, its task force on women and its appeals to women interested in a just society.

But in a few brutal words you exposed the facade. Neither you nor your party are the least bit interested in the rights of women. On the eve of a federal election, you have declared abortion a central political question. You have declared war on women. You have declared your intention to use all your weapons as you have in the past — the laws, the courts, the government, the press.

But we have on our side the cause of justice and the support of millions of Canadians. We intend to organize it into such a powerful movement that you will have to repeal those inhuman laws. We will be uniting with all who support the democratic right of women to choose when they want to become mothers.

We'll fight for everything you oppose, Trudeau — the right of all women to live full, creative lives, free from constant worry about unwanted pregnancies. And we'll fight to win, because for us this is not an abstract debate. It is war and our lives are at stake.

photo by Arnie Mintz

NOVEMBER 20, 1971. Mass actions for repeal of anti-abortion laws challenge church and state control over women's bodies, and draw thousands of women into the struggle for their liberation.

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From the editors:

Feminism and political action

Should feminists contest the coming federal election as "independent" candidates or encourage more women to run as candidates in all the political parties? These questions are posed by the formation of the Women's Movement for Political Action, initiated by activists in such organizations as the Voice of Women.

The group has held no public meetings yet, but in a press release Kay Macpherson, a leader of VOW, states: "We may try running a trial woman, even across parties, to find out if women will lend support to a candidate to get more women in the House of Commons."

Similar views were expressed recently by Laura Sabia of the National Ad Hoc Action Committee on the Status of Women. "I don't care how you do it, but make sure we get good numbers in the House," Sabia told a meeting in Toronto, describing such political action as a "new strategy" for the women's movement.

There's no doubt that women face scandalous discrimination in government and political life. Trudeau himself admitted it when he told a delegation of professional women Feb. 28 that of the 1,380 appointments to boards and agencies by his government since he took office in 1968, only 116 have gone to women. And his only defense was that this miserable record would look good if compared with the record of other governments and private industry!

But to see the solution in fielding more women candidates for public office is to beg the question: what is their program?

Candidates' programs are established by their party affiliations, not their sex. And in Canada, politics have longbeenpolarized along class lines between the parties which defend women's oppression — the Liberals, Conservatives and Social Credit — and the New Democratic Party, the labor party challenging all those parties of big business.

The central issue for the women's movement in the next election will be repeal of the abortion laws. Only one party has a clear unequivocal position for repeal: the NDP. The logic of any campaign to run "independent" women candidates is necessarily directed against the NDP.

The women's movement must challenge **all** the parties and candidates on where they stand on this issue.

But activists in the women's movement have no business joining or working for any of the capitalist parties. They must get into the NDP and work actively within it — as candidates, too — to see that the NDP identifies firmly and prominently with the abortion law repeal campaign and other demands of the movement.

What can women get out of the federal election? The biggest step forward would be the election of an NDP government solidly committed to repeal of the abortion laws. That's what politically active women must work towards.

Montreal conference backs Morgentaler

MONTREAL — "I didn't take lives, I saved them," declared Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the Montreal physician facing charges for performing illegal abortions.

Morgentaler was addressing a conference of close to 150 people called by the Comite pour l'Abrogation des Lois sur l'Avortement in Montreal March 5.

The conference adopted a resolution to carry activities publicizing the Morgentaler case beginning with a picket line outside the court when his case is tried later this month. They also decided to organize a province-wide day of protest against the abortion laws on May 6.

Morgentaler, a leading member of the Humanist Society of Canada, is well known throughout Canada for his longstanding fight for women's right to abortion, for his concrete aid to many women who needed safe abortions but could not get them legally because of the laws.

Dr. Morgentaler is pleading not guilty to performing criminal acts. He agrees he did abortions but claims it is the laws, not himself, that are criminal. The conference enthusiastically agreed with him.

The conference also heard speeches from the editor of the French-language Chatelaine magazine, Lise Payette of CBC, and Suzanne Trudeau of the Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes. The provincial NDP sent a message of support.

Family planners debate abortion

OTTAWA — Women's right to abortion became a central issue at the recent government-financed family planning conference in Ottawa, even though conference organizers had stated it was not to be allowed on the agenda.

Denying women the right to abortion is a form of rape, declared Dr. Lise Fortier, gynecologist in charge of the family planning clinic at Montreal's Notre Dame hospital. In direct defiance of the ban on abortion discussion, she attacked the abortion laws as a "montrous inequality" where women are discriminated against on the basis of wealth, language and community.

"The injustices can only be eliminated by repealing the laws," she said.

The conference ended up adopting the position that family planning policy should encompass abortion, despite the objection of many delegates that abortion was too controversial to take a stand on.

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Status of women conference

Women opt for independent action

by Kate Alderdice

The largest cross-country women's rights conference yet to take place in Canada was held April 7-9 in Toronto. The "Strategies for Change" conference organized by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women brought together women from every province and from every point of view — from the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire and supporters of the Liberal and Tory parties, to feminists and socialists.

The conference organizers, headed by Laura Sabia, had high hopes for the conference. They got a grant of $15,000 from the federal government to finance it. They invited all the most prominent Canadian women and they invited Trudeau and Health Minister Munroe to a banquet to kick off the affair.

And they made sure that controversial issues would be swept under the rug. While workshops were organized on many issues there was not one workshop set aside for discussion of action to make the government repeal the abortion laws.

But, while the conference was seen by its organizers as an opportunity to channel the growing discontent of women into safe, pro-government outlets, it burst out of this narrow framework.

The 600 women overwhelmingly rejected a proposal pushed by Laura Sabia to establish a government-funded council on the status of women which would in many ways supersede the National Action Committee.

Abortion repeal became the "non-issue that kept coming up." The lie of Florence Bird's opening address on the "progress" the government has made in putting the Royal Commission recommendations into effect was laid bare when one woman asked "But they haven't done anything to make abortion legal — when are they going to repeal the laws?"

Bird was forced to admit there was no immediate prospect of the government even reforming the anti-abortion laws.

Workshop after workshop ended up discussing this pressing issue and a number brought forward recommendations for action on abortion. The abortion issue was also raised by the Alliance for Life which was not only allowed delegate status but was publicly welcomed by Sabia.

LAURA SABIA — "We are not without friends in government circles."

But the abortion issue exploded onto the conference floor in a debate over a proposal from the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition that the conference adjourn Saturday evening to take part in a demonstration against Trudeau.

There was widespread sympathy with the motion even though most of the participants had never been on a demonstration in their lives. Trudeau had turned down an invitation to speak to the conference saying that he was "too busy" — only to show up in Toronto to address the all-male meeting of the press club. The conference organizers moved to squelch the discussion on the demonstration but were forced to call a vote on it. In spite of vicious attacks on it, one quarter of the delegates voted to adjourn to demonstrate against the prime minister, and about 40 walked out of the conference to demonstrate.

The conference as a whole voted overwhelmingly for resolutions endorsing the abortion law repeal petition being circulated by the Canadian Women's Coalition, and calling for abortion and birth control education in the schools, and the establishment of clinics to perform abortions.

It was above all the attempt by the conference organizers to sweep the abortion issue under the rug that created a real discontent among the delegates about the way the conference was being run.

This discontent was expressed not only in the debates on the floor and the positive response to the representatives of the abortion repeal coalition, but also in the formation on the second day of the conference of a "radical caucus", a group of about 60 women. This group expressed their frustration with the Sabia leadership's efforts to keep the lid on the conference. They were concerned about the attempts to tie the women's movement to the government via the council proposal and about the exclusion of the abortion issue.

But this group was unable to unite in an effective opposition and ended up presenting a statement calling for the serving of "natural foods" at women's conferences and situating them in less posh surroundings.

Sabia's strategy suffered a real setback, when the conference overwhelmingly rejected her government council proposal. This big victory was lamented by many representatives of the status quo as being the conference's downfall.

According to Helen Worthington, columnist for the Toronto Daily Star, this failure showed that women are biologically incapable of uniting! She writes: "The convention seemed to prove the theory of Lionel Tiger's book, Men in Groups, which contends that men have gained power by bonding together while women are biologically and historically unused to this technique."

Adrienne Clarkson, the well-known television personality and author also presents the rejection of this proposal as the biggest error of the conference. But she attributes it to our ignorance rather than our biology. In a column in the Globe and Mail entitled "Do Women Require an Ottawa Voice?" she laments the distrust in the government that she sensed on the part of many delegates.

Brenda Dineen of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws put forward another view when she spoke at the conference: "We don't want a government council because it is this very government which is responsible for our second-class status," she said. "They aren't going to help us unless we unite to force them to do it. Trudeau has made this clear above all by his callous stand on abortion.

"Our strength lies in our independent action," she concluded. The majority of the participants agreed.

Another proposal to divert the women's movement — the proposal

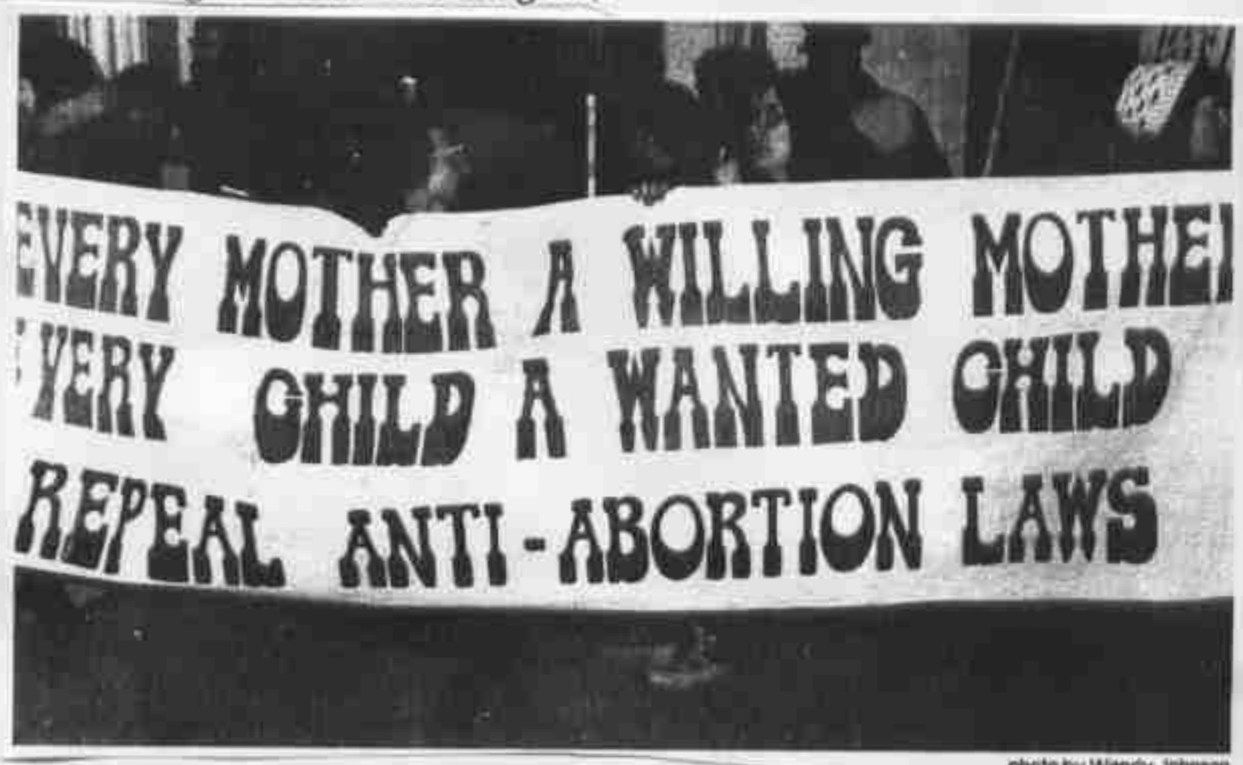

photo by Wendy Johnson

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to field non-partisan women's candidates in the upcoming federal election — also failed to win the support of the delegates. While this proposal, put forward by the Women's Political Action Movement, at first seemed logical to many women because women are so totally excluded from political action, it soon became clear that it posed no effective strategy for political action.

Those who put it forward thought that women could unite regardless of program and political affiliations simply on the basis of being women. They rejected not only the parties of the status quo but also the New Democratic Party. And they failed to see the importance of independent mass action such as the campaign for repeal of the abortion laws.

An alternative approach to political action was presented to the conference by the League for Socialist Action. The LSA, which stirred up much interest in socialist ideas through its literature table and the interventions of its delegates issued a statement calling on women to enter the political arena. It called on women to confront all the candidates on women's rights, and particularly on the issue of abortion law repeal. It also called on women to support and become candidates for the one party which stands firmly for repeal of the abortion laws, and has a full program of women's rights, the New Democratic Party.

"The NDP is able to represent the interests of women in this way," the statement points out, "Because, unlike the big business parties of the Liberals and Tories, it depends for its support on all those who are fighting to win their full rights — working people, students and women."

Lorna Grant, executive secretary of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws, spoke on the campaign of her organization to make abortion law repeal the biggest issue in the election and encouraged all women to join in this form of political action.

And those delegates already strongly committed to the Liberal or Tory parties also opposed the "independent women's candidates" proposal. Thus, what promised to be one of the biggest questions of debate became a non-issue by the end of the conference.

The conference failed to show just how far women can go when they unite to win their rights because the one issue that has shown its power to unite women — the issue of abortion law repeal — was for that very reason pushed aside time and again by the conference organizers. But it did show the clear anti-government dynamic of the growing movement of women demanding full status as human beings. In spite of all the efforts of the most articulate female opponents of the feminist movement the conference rejected the safe, pro-government channels in favor of independent action for women's rights.

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Time's 'New Woman' aims to split feminists

by JACQUIE HENDERSON

Times have changed since the days when the newspapers and magazines slandered the women's liberation movement daily as being a crazy bunch of bra burners. Now women's liberation is supposedly respectable and harmless!

The new version of feminism is an attempt to detour the millions of women who are coming to the realization that it is not themselves that must be changed — their haird or deodorant — but rather it is thi society that must be fundamentall altered. Having failed to halt th development of the women' liberation movement, these skillful defenders of the status quo, are attempting to divert and split the

Marlene Dixon

movement.

The men in power have put all they have into propagating this new myth about women. Many magazines have devoted special issues to the "new woman," the liberated woman who is out to change her life by changing herself. Women's magazines have been altered to present this new woman as their star. And "superwomen's libbers" like Gloria Steinman, editor of the slick U.S. magazine Ms, have been developed to speak for their cause.

Time Canada's special March 20 New Woman issue is part of this attempt to make women's liberation respectable. Most of its 82 pages are dominated by this theme.

In the five pages it devotes to Canadian women, Time succinctly shows their version of the feminist movement in Canada. They quote Jan Steele, head of the Liberal party task force on women, to back up their position: "There are as many meanings of women's liberation as there are women. Canadians have a peculiar talent, not for watering down or diluting policies, but for making them less extreme."

Time calls this the Canadian "softening instinct."

Understandably Time tries to play down and even write off the real struggles of women that are challenging capitalism, its laws and institutions. They are forced to admit that in Canada "the feminists' most widely publicized crusade still lies in pushing for further reform of the abortion law" to make abortion available on demand. But they dismiss this struggle. They feel it is unimportant since, according to Time, Trudeau's opposition to it determinesthat it has slender chance for success.

Under the headline, "Dangers Ahead," Time quotes Marlene Dixon, the McGill University professor and former feminist who gained a lot of publicity for her declaration several months ago that "feminism is dead" in Canada. Dixon tells Time she is worried about the identification of the women's liberation movement with the struggle for repeal of the abortion laws.

Time quotes Dixon as attacking the movement for the right to abortion, saying, "You can forget about women's liberation if it is defined as anti-children and anti-family."

Although Dixon calls herself a Marxist-Leninist and supports the Chinese revolution, her statement echoes the most reactionary opposition to women's rights.

The spokesmen for the church and state who fashion themselves as the defenders of human life try to portray the women who demand the right to control their own bodies and lives as "murderers." Dixon's attack is also designed to paint the struggle of women as anti-human. In this she purposely turns reality upside down. It is the women who are fighting for the right to abortion who are working for the theme, "Every mother a willing mother; Every child a wanted child." State-enforced motherhood doesn't help children any more than it helps women. Those who are so concerned about the fetus show remarkably little concern about the plight of children once they are born. And no wonder. Once they are born children are not the churches' or the government's responsibility — they are the mother's.

It is the opponents of a women's right to abortion that are anti-human. They are not interested in preserving life — only in preventing women from having full lives. In the process they don't care if they also deprive children from the chance to have a meaningful life.

But in the process of attacking it by appealing to the most ignorant prejudices against feminism, Dixon actually hits on an important reality of the feminist struggle: In its defense of the rights of women and children, the abortion repeal movement attacks the fundamental underpinnings of the family as it exists in capitalism. And it attacks them with good reason, for there is something basically wrong with the family today.

Far from being a harmonious institution based on love and affection, the family at present is a prison. All its members are tied to it by economic and social necessity rather than choice. Capitalism doesn't provide for its members. It shoves this overwhelming responsibility onto the frail family unit.

In doing so it determines that the family is one of the most basic institutions through which the social

and economic inequities between different classes are perpetuated. Each family relies only on its own resources to feed, clothe and take care of all the needs of its members and is pitted in bitter competition with all other families to get the jobs, goods and services to carry out its tasks. For the vast majority, the working class families, this is a painful struggle in which human needs are sacrificed in the constant attempt to make ends meet.

And the woman is the backbone of the family.

The family defines women exclusively by their reproductive functions. Within the family the woman is limited to the narrow role of wife and mother. As such she provides the unpaid labor that is essential to the carrying out of the multitude of tasks assigned to the

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family. Women and children are economically dependent on the husband-father. Woman's role is not a matter of choice — it relies on forced motherhood for its continued existence. This not only makes the woman a victim of her biology, but it uses this as a rationale for paying her lower wages on the job and denying her equal educational opportunities. Her other roles must take a secondary place to her "natural" role.

photo by MacInnis

Jacquie Henderson

It is this, the limiting of woman's role in life to her biological role, that the struggle for abortion law repeal is frontally challenging. Since women's second class status is based on this narrow definition of women, a victory in the struggle to give women a choice over when and and if they have children, would mark an important victory in the struggle of women to control their own lives. It would deal a heavy blow at the "natural inferiority of women" and in doing so would also shake up the family and pose the question of new kinds of human relationships based on choice and affection rather than economic and social force.

This is the key thing that makes the abortion struggle so powerful. Just as lack of control over our bodies is essential to our oppression, gaining control is essential to our liberation. An that upsets the very foundation of the family.

No wonder the ruling class is so firm in its opposition to the abortion law repeal movement! They maintain their oppressive system by presenting the family as an eternal, ever-present structure through human history.

REPEAL ALL ANTI-ABORTION LAWS
every mother a willing mother every child a wanted child
Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition

photo by MacInnis

Nothing could be farther from the truth. For the greater part of human history, before the development of class society, the family was not the basic unit of society. The clan, organized and led by women, was responsible for caring for all its members. Individuals weren't isolated off to care for their own offspring, the whole clan assumed this responsibility and all others. There was no concept of competition between the members of the society for its goods; communal property relations prevailed and every member of society had equal access to the clan's wealth.

This was the kind of society the white men from Europe found when they "discovered" this continent. And it was the kind of society that existed around the world before the relatively recent development of class society with its competitive patriarchal family.

In challenging women's "natural" role in the family, the feminist movement, focused in the struggle for repeal of the abortion laws, is challenging one of the pillars which uphold capitalism. This movement poses the possibility that the family doesn't always have to exist as an economic unit and the necessity for society to take responsibility for its members as it did in early matriarchal society.

The abortion repeal struggle is the opening shot in the struggle for human liberation — a new kind of society which can free not just a few individuals, a "liberated couple", but everyone; which can build new relationships between the sexes, new relationships between parents and children.

This is what the hue and cry against abortion is about. It is not that the abortion movement is anti-human. It is that it poses the need to replace capitalism with a human society — socialism.

This powerful anticapitalist dynamic of the movement upsets Trudeau and Time. That is why they have a strategy to try to hold back this struggle by splitting women away from it and channelling them into safer directions — safer for the ruling class, that is.

Time expresses this strategy with all the subtle skill of Madison Avenue. And the Church is hard on its heels. A few weeks before Time came out, a representative of the Catholic Church spilled the beans in a column in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald March 11. Rev. Monseignor Colin Campbell, worries about the fact that women who are joining the women's liberation movement are turned off the church. The only solution he can see to the problem is to try to split the feminist movement and support the wing that doesn't support abortion on demand.

He says, "What is the solution to this impasse? Perhaps the rapprochement will be to work with that wing of the women's lib movement that does not support this policy (abortion on demand) ..."

This pressure from anti-abortion forces is what Dixon and other women are succumbing to when they abandon the abortion repeal struggle. They are playing right into the hands of the ruling class which maintains its privileged position at our expense only by dividing up the oppressed, and pitting them against each other. Its main principle is divide and rule.

Women like Marlene Dixon will have to think carefully and determine where they stand in this struggle. Because the present rulers are sorely in need of women to mouth their anti-women lies.

The women's liberation movement has its own dynamic. Women are responding to the proud chant: "Women unite! Stand up and fight — Safe abortion is our right!" We are out for human liberation and nothing is going to stop us.

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How can women gain political power?

by JACQUIE HENDERSON

How can women, who have been traditionally excluded from politics, gain greater political power?

This widely-debated question was the subject of a panel discussion at Toronto's Town Hall, May 24. Four hundred and twenty women and fifty men crowded into the 450-person capacity hall to hear seven women panelists speak. Extra chairs had to be brought in to seat the overflow crowd.

The panelists included women from the Liberal, Conservative and New Democratic parties. But the feature attraction was the participation of two women, Aileen Gregory and Kay MacPherson, running as independent candidates in the upcoming federal election for the newly-founded Women for Political Action (WPA). So many women had something to say in the discussion period that when the meeting ended some still hadn't had a chance to speak.

The meeting received such a big response because it dealt with a topic of growing concern to women — the fact of their exclusion from political power on all levels: municipal, provincial and federal. Women represent 51 percent of the Canadian population. But of the 265 federal MPs, 264 are men, one is a woman. Only 116 out of 1,380 federal appointments to boards and agencies have gone to women under the Trudeau term, and these are by and large minor appointments.

The record of these men shows to what extent they represent the needs of women — The Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommendations lie untouched by the government, even unread by many members of the ruling cabinet. Provincial laws against job discrimination, where they have been passed following militant action by feminists, are ignored by companies and government alike. Child care is still being buck-passed between federal, provincial and municipal governments.

But their record is most blatantly sexist on the question of abortion. The abortion section of the Criminal Code was enacted by and is upheld by male politicians — but it affects only women. A debate in parliament on abortion has been promised by Trudeau for some two years now, but each session ends without it ever occurring. And the only woman in the House of Commons, NDP MP Grace MacInnis is the one with the

Kay MacPherson

private members' bill for repeal of the laws pending in the house.

But the outrageous injustice of this situation doesn't bother the government.Not even when, in one of the times she managed to sneak the question on the floor of the House, MacInnis ironically promised the other MPs that, if her bill was passed to make abortion a matter of choice for women, no one would force the "honorable gentlemen" to have abortions, did they get the point.

The "democratic process" is one of the clearest examples of the systematic denial of democratic rights to women which is upheld by all the laws and institutions of this country.

The Town Hall meeting reflected widespread dissatisfaction with this discrimination. The formation of Women for Political Action is one of the manifestations of this growing awareness among women. More and more women are realizing that they must take political action if they are to win their rights.

Women for Political Action, a small but widely publicized group whose leader, Kay MacPherson, is a prominent conservative figure in the antiwar movement, have a radical-sounding proposal for political action. They propose running independent women candidates. They encourage "women themselves to take up the reins of political power" and not to stick to the "established political parties" since they have traditionally discriminated against women.

photo by Jeff White

POLITICAL ACTION. Mass demonstrations for repeal of anti-abortion laws challenge state control over women's bodies and lives.

But the real content of the WPA stragegy for women is exposed when they elaborate on their proposal. In the June 5 Toronto Star, Kay MacPherson, replying to an editorial in that paper, wrote:

"Women for Political Action does not insist that 'women shun the established political parties.' We, too, welcome any competent women who will try to reduce the 264-1 ratio in the House of Commons, and at other levels of government also . . . Perhaps, too, a women's caucus in the House, with or without party affiliations, might make quite a difference."

So, the putting forward of a few independent candidates is only one part of a more general, strategy which includes supporting "competent" women running for the established political parties and a caucus in the House — cross-party or otherwise. What ties this strategy together is the concept that what is necessary is to push the government to act on behalf of women by pressuring it from within.

But this strategy couldn't be more wrong.

Effective political action for women is not that which directs women to ally with their enemies, but rather independent action in direct conflict with the establish-

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ment and their parties. This has been the lesson taught by the feminist movement, that has around the the question of abortion mobilized thousands of women in effective political action in the streets. It has resisted pressures for it to become simply a harmless pressure lobby in Ottawa, but instead has pressured Ottawa to meet the need of women through organizing campaigns to mobilize masses of women from all backgrounds to demand, through petitions, demonstrations, rallies, etc. their rights. This is a profoundly political movement.

But the WPA representatives do not recognize it as a key form of political action for women. Just as they fail to note the important fact that all the parties in Canada are not the same. Doris Anderson, editor of Chatelaine magazine, outlined this fact in her address at the May 24 meeting. In making the case for why she thought women should run for established political parties, she defined what she meant by these parties — all those except the NDP. The NDP, she said, is not effective. It has never achieved power in Canada and probably won't in the next election. So women should "run to win" — run for the Liberals and Tories — since one of them will form the government. Other panelists — Esther Greenglass of the Liberal party Task Force on Women and Margaret Scrivener, a notoriously reactionary Conservative party Ontario MPP, heartily agreed. If women want to get ahead they must support the parties with power.

In other words, women, they say, must support their opponents in order to defeat them. What twisted logic we have been taught to believe! Where has this gotten women in the past? Nowhere. Remember Judy LaMarsh? She was a competent women in Pearson's cabinet — minister of Health and Welfare. She did nothing for women. She upheld the reactionary abortion laws, opposed medicare, and so forth and so on. She was an effective agent for a party based on sexism. But even she was squeezed out of the Liberal leadership as she explained in her telling book "Bird in a Gilded Cage."

The Liberals, Tories and Socreds all represent the present system. They may have some well-meaning but misguided women in them, but they will never represent the needs of women. They are financed and run by the big corporations and they represent the tiny minority of profit-hungry men who own the wealth of this country. This society, which is based not on the satisfaction of human need, but rather on competition for profits and accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, is rooted in sexism, racism, war, pollution, poverty and all other forms of oppression and exploitation.

So it should not be surprising that the parties that represent the interests of this system cannot act effectively for women. No matter how many women they may allow to run, no matter how big a caucus of women might be set up, these parties will not allow women to determine their policies. They have their vested interests to protect, and their interests lie in keeping women oppressed and powerless.

The other party in the running, the New Democratic Party, is not the same kind of party at all. It is not financed by the big corporations — not one of them supports it. Not one of the big business daily newspapers support it. This is because it doesn't represent their interests. It represents the interests of the working people of Canada. It is financed and supported by the organized labor movement.

As the independent expression of the oppressed majority in Canada, it is able to respond to the real needs of the oppressed — to give voice to the growing anti-imperialist, feminist and socialist movements.

It is no accident that the NDP has a qualitatively better program for women than any other party. Because of its class nature it is open to women. The reformist leadership of the NDP might cower from the complete change in society necessary for women to achieve liberation, but the party is an important part of that struggle. Unlike the Liberals, Tories and Socreds, the NDP leadership has to respond to pressure from the ranks. So when women and Waffle caucus supporters mobilized to get a program for women adopted at the last convention — including repeal of the abortion laws, equal pay for equal work and demands for government-financed child care — it was adopted. And when feminists pushed Stephen Lewis in the last Ontario election to make abortion law repeal a point in his platform, he reluctantly made it one of the main issues of the campaign.

The Women for Political Action proposal is not a new, exciting form of political action for women. It is another version of the same old lie that bucking the system will never get you anywhere. To win full liberation women are going to have to — along with their allies, the workers, students, Native people, Quebecois — all the oppressed — transform this whole system that depends on oppression for its existence.

Women need a socialist society — a society which puts human beings first — in order to live with dignity as full human beings. To even gain a few rights basic to their lives, women have to organize a powerful political campaign to wrest them from the present rulers. This political campaign does not include any of the proposals of the WPA which are a double-barelled attack on the mass feminist movement and on the NDP, the two key aspects of effective women's political action.

Women demand equal increase

Two interesting aspects of Ontario's labor laws are highlighted by the current strike of 340 employees of Dare Foods Ltd., in Kitchener, members of Local 173 of the International Brewery Workers Union.

The first law, enacted by the Tory government under heavy pressure from militant feminists last year, supposedly protects women from discrimination in wage scales because of their sex.

At Dare, 90 percent of the workers are women, and they earn a lower rate than the men. On May 28, the union negotiating committee recommended acceptance of an offer to give men an extra 55 cents over two years; the women to get only 45 cents. The women voted to reject the offer and struck.

One male worker, explaining the rejection said: "The women wanted the same increase as the men, no matter what it is." As one woman on the picket line put it, "A lot of us work harder than the men in there.

The simple fact is that even if the workers had accepted the proposed contract, it would not have been challenged by the government, despite its discriminatory nature. The women's equal opportunity act is simply not enforced.

Other laws are enforced. Thus, when Canadian Drivers Pool (a company whose sole business is to break union picket lines with scabs, or move struck goods), was hired by Dare to move truckloads of cookies out of the plant, they received police protection to do the job.

Hundreds of windows were broken and 10 strikers arrested when a picket line of almost 1,000 strikers and sympathizers tried to block the removal of the goods. William Thom, executive vice-president of Dare stated "We intend to do what we have a legal right to do."

Obviously Mr. Thom is not referring to equal wages.

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Conference to map abortion campaign

by LINDA MEISSENHEIMER
and BETH ROBERTSON

"Canadian women have been denied the right to abortion long enough. The U.S. Supreme Court decision adds even more power to our demand that the Canadian government act now to repeal Canada's anti-abortion laws. We must build a campaign so big and so powerful that the government will be forced to action."

This statement from Lorna Grant, executive secretary of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws, reflected the optimistic and determined mood of the cross country coordinating committee meeting of the Coalition, held Feb. 4 in Saskatoon.

Thirty women representing Coalition chapters in Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Toronto met to map out plans for the next stage in the offensive against the Canadian abortion laws and all those who uphold them. The meeting focused on plans for the second cross Canada Conference for Abortion Law Repeal to be held in Toronto, March 16-18. This conference will bring together women from across Canada to protest Canada's restrictive abortion laws and to plan further activities to press for repeal of these laws.

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision - which overturned restrictive abortion laws in 46 states set a powerful precedent for Canada. The Canadian Women's Coalition plans to use this decision to move out and broaden the campaign for a woman's right to abortion in this country.

"We are part of an international movement for abortion rights and now the wheel has been set in motion," said Joan Campana, a staff organizer for the Coalition who spoke at a women's liberation conference in Minneapolis the previous day where the international struggle for abortion law repeal was a featured topic. "Our sisters in the United States have won an important victory and we can now build on their victory by using the upcoming cross Canada conference to involve women from every sector of Canadian life — women of all ages and backgrounds; from every occupation and organization and all political beliefs. We now have the opportunity to expand the campaign here in Canada and reach out to new people in new areas."

The conference has already received broad sponsorship from such groups and individuals as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; Women for Political Action; the Alberta NDP; the Ontario Federation of Students Women's Conference; Ottawa Area NDP; Grace Hartman, CUPE; and Iona Samis, Ontario Federation of Labor.

Ambitious plans are being made by Coalition chapters across Canada to build the conference through meetings, debates, fund-raising and special projects in the community and on the campuses and high schools.

A major building action for the cross Canada conference will be the speaking tour of Joan Campana which was launched at the coordinating committee meeting. Campana will visit at least ten cities speaking on "Why Canada's Abortion Laws Must Be Repealed" and meeting with Coalition activists.

On Feb. 3, 80 women from seven centers founded Saskatchewan Women for Abortion Law Repeal at a provincial conference in Saskatoon. This new provincial chapter plans regional tours to build the Canadian Women's Coalition and many women at the conference indicated their intention of attending the cross Canada conference.

Lynda Little of the B.C. chapter of the Coalition told the coordinating committee meeting of the tremendous response to the Tribunal on Abortion, Contraception and Sterilization, to be held Feb. 15 as part of Women's Week at the University of British Columbia. Women will be testifying about their experiences as a result of restrictive abortion laws, lack of contraception

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and forced sterilization. Doctors and lawyers will also be submitting testimony based on their experiences with the present laws denying women control over their reproductive lives.

The cross Canada conference will provide an opportunity for women across Canada to share these experiences and decide on action and policy for the campaign over the next period. On Friday evening a public protest rally is planned to kick off the conference. Prominent women from Canada and around the world are being approached to speak at the rally which will call on the Canadian government to move immediately to repeal all anti-abortion laws from the criminal code.

The spirit of the cordinating committee meeting reflected the growth of the abortion law repeal movement both in size and confidence since the founding conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition one year ago and showed the new possibilities for building the movement in the next year.

DAYCARE SIT-IN. Protesters prepare to leave B.C. government daycare information center after 11-day occupation. NDP government agreed to negotiate with protesters on their demands for 24-hour child care facilities.

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Conference for abortion law repeal

The case for a women's coalition

LIS ANGUS

The second cross-country conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws (CWC), being held in Toronto March 16-18, is a significant event for the Canadian women's movement.

The conference takes place in the context of a rapidly growing sentiment for abortion law repeal and a mushrooming international repeal movement. This movement won a major victory in January with the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, which overturned restrictive abortion laws in 46 states.

At the same time, opponents of repeal and of women's right to abortion are marshalling their forces. Manitoba MLA Joe Borowski continues to attack the repeal movement. "Right to Life" forces are holding a cross-country meeting this month. And the Canadian government, by firmly refusing to even debate the question in Parliament, has lined itself up solidly on the side of these reactionary forces.

And it is consciously bolstering those forces. In an interview with Southam News Services March 5, federal Justice Minister Otto Lang said he was "concerned" that the present restrictive abortion laws are being interpreted too broadly by some doctors and hospital committees. He has ordered a special study of hospital committees, which may be functioning as "rubber stamps" for women who want abortions.

The CWC conference has been called to unite the growing forces who support repeal, and to project plans for coordinated action in the coming months.

A major achievement of the abortion law repeal campaign, beginning with the Abortion Caravan action in the spring of 1970, has been to take the abortion issue out of the realm of population control and focus it on women's rights.

JOAN CAMPANA, cross-country coordinator of abortion rights coalition.

It is around this concept — that women have a right to decide whether to continue a pregnancy — that the key debates of this conference will center.

The policy of the Canadian Women's Coalition, established at its founding conference in Winnipeg a year ago, states that since abortion is a woman's right, the repeal struggle is primarily a women's struggle. The key task is to unite women in that struggle. This means that the formulation of goals and strategy for the campaign should be done by women and that the leadership of the campaign will be women.

This policy is being questioned by some forces in the repeal movement who feel that the CWC should open its decision-making meetings to men.

But the struggle to win the right to abortion is primarily a women's struggle. It is women whose lives are completely changed by a pregnancy, wanted or not. It is women who are constantly threatened with the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy, and by the fact that we have little or no control over pregnancy.

It is women who, by the thousands, face humiliating and dangerous delays and red tape prolonged by hospital abortion committees; who risk mutilation and even death at the hands of back-alley abortionists; who — the ones who can afford it — pay high prices to get abortions outside the country; or who resign themselves to giving birth to children they did not choose to have.

The fight to win repeal of the abortion laws is part of the world-wide struggle for women's rights. The fact that we are denied access to abortion is no accident — it is part of our oppression as women. And our lack of control over pregnancy is used to tie us to our traditional role in the family and to deny us control over other aspects of our lives — it is used to justify inadequate education, less pay, less access to job promotions, etc.

Women are divided from each other. It is the division and isolation that makes our continued oppression possible, and is key to maintaining our subservient role in society.

Collective action makes it possible for us to fight our oppression. Women are taught to be passive and submissive. It is not easy for us to

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learn to be leaders, organizers, speakers. It is in collective action that we learn these things; and it is through collective action that we will win struggles like the fight for abortion law repeal.

The key role in the struggle for the right to abortion will be played by women. No one else can win this victory for us. Male supporters can help, but women are the backbone of the campaign. And women must reserve the right to plan the tempo and actions of the campaign themselves.

This does not mean that men are excluded from the activities of the campaign, or that this policy excludes organizations which have men among their members.

The Canadian Women's Coalition is an **action coalition**; it provides a framework for individuals and groups to unite in coordinated actions planned by CWC conferences and meetings.

The CWC does not expect other groups to dissolve their independent identities into the CWC, but simply encourages them to support the united actions of the campaign. The activites of the CWC aim to broaden the support from other organizations — particularly from organizations which can play a big role in furthering women's struggles, such as the NDP.

Because the repeal struggle is primarily a women's struggle, the coalition asks that organizations with mixed membership send women delegates to decision-making meetings — although the public activities of the coalition are of course open to men.

The repeal movement is under heavy pressure to tone down the feminist nature of the campaign, to make it more "respectable." These pressures originate with the ruling

GRACE MacINNIS. NDP MP presses abortion repeal bill in parliament.

class of our society, who have an interest in maintaining women's oppression and in dividing the women's movement — in preventing women from uniting in effective action against our oppression.

It is this pressure on the movement which is reflected in suggestions that coalition decision-making be opened to men. It is also reflected in uneasiness with the concept that abortion is a woman's right. This uneasiness crops up in calls for various restrictions on abortion rather than total repeal, and in formulations like "abortion should be a private matter between a woman and her doctor." In fact this phrase is used on the petition presently being circulated by the Canadian Women's Coalition.

But this phrase contradicts — or at least blurs — the clear focus of "abortion: a woman's right to choose." It gives something to the idea — so deeply rooted in our society — that women are not really capable of making responsible decisions on their own — they must be accountable to someone.

The upcoming CWC conference must clearly reaffirm the CWC policy of a woman's action coalition, united around the concept that abortion is a woman's right.

It is the united actions of the coalition that will forge the strong movement we need to win this victory. The proposal for a cross-country tribunal on abortion, made at the Feb. 4 CWC coordinating committee meeting in Saskatoon, is an action which would play a big role in building the repeal campaign; it would be a powerful denunciation of the government in the name of the women of Canada. Such actions orient the repeal movement towards gaining mass support, to becoming a mass movement.

It is such actions, built by a women's action coalition around the theme of "abortion: a woman's right to choose", that will most effectively further our cause.

labor Challenge #76 (April 1973) p.1

Speech by U.S. feminist leader

The politics of the abortion struggle

The following is abridged from a speech given March 16 in Toronto by Dr. Barbara Roberts, at a public rally to launch the cross-Canada conference for abortion law repeal. Roberts is a national coordinator of the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) in the U.S.

A popular medical dictionary defines a disease as literally a "lack of ease," and venereal disease as disease acquired through sexual intercourse. It would appear therefore that unwanted pregnancy is the most common venereal disease.

It is associated with a woman's physical, mental, social and economic suffering. Seeking to be cured of this disease, women throughout history have suffered pain, mutilation and death in numbers that absolutely stagger the imagination. Today, although the cure for unwanted pregnancy is statistically safer than carrying the pregnancy to term, abortion is still widely withheld because of antiquated laws and religious tenets not shared by a majority of people.

Tonight I'd like to discuss the political aspects of abortion and to comment on the struggle that led up to the recent Supreme Court decision.

The first point that must be made in discussing abortion is that we cannot treat abortion in a vacuum. Any discussion of abortion has to deal with a very basic historical reality, and that is that we all live in a patriarchal society, which legally, economically, socially and sexually oppresses women and has done so since the dawn of history.

ROOTS OF OPPRESSION

Laws against abortion are only a rather brutal example of the systematic oppression directed against women by this society. And to understand why there is opposition to such an obvious right as the right to abortion, we have to examine the history of patriarchal society. In all of these patriarchal cultures, and this one is no exception, a very small minority of people, exclusively male, have ruled over the vast majority of people, basing their power on two things — they control wealth and the means of producing wealth, and they control people and the means of reproducing people. Now we women are the only available means of reproducing people. We produce the most important product of any society — its members. Since the discovery at some point in prehistoric time, of the cause and effect relationship between sex and reproduction, the only way to control reproduction (until this century) has been to control women, especially their sexual behaviour. This control has usually taken the form of severely circumscribing our rights and our sexuality; and this control has been buttressed by all the patriarchal society's institutions — the courts, marriage, the church, the family, etc.

In the last couple of years two very important events have occurred, which have placed the issue of a woman's right to abortion squarely on the political agenda. First of all, the unravelling of the mechanics of reproduction and the development of effective contraceptives and abortion techniques have brought about, for the first time in history, the objective preconditions for sexual liberation. And by sexual liberation, I mean the seizure by women of control over their own reproduction.

Now the second important event has been the rise of the women's liberation movement all over the world. And what the feminist movement has done is vital to the issue of abortion. Because for the first time it has exposed and exploded myths that have been used to keep us in our place — which traditionally has been subject to a man, and hopefully barefoot and pregnant.

Dr. Barbara Roberts

We've exploded the myth that men were ordained by some god to rule, and women, by that same god, to obey. We've exploded the myth of our inferiority; the myth that our place is in the home; the myth that our fulfilment comes from serving men; the myth that sex is sinful and dirty, and doubly dirty for women. We've exploded the myth that unwanted pregnancies are just punishment for the sin of enjoying our bodies.

Finally and most importantly, we've exploded the myth that abortion is a crime. The only crime surrounding abortion is the colossal crime perpetrated by a few men against the right of women to control their own bodies. The whole abortion debate, in the final analysis, boils down to just one question — shall

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women have the right to control their own bodies. Will control over reproduction, this vital societal function, be transferred from the hands of a few powerful men to the women, to the masses of women, who actually do the work of reproduction. That's what the whole struggle is really about — power. Now transfers of power have never taken place easily in the course of history; such transfers are labelled war or revolution. And this transfer of the power over reproduction that women are demanding is nothing short of revolutionary.

ANTI-WOMEN FORCES

The male rulers of society are well aware of that fact, and they have marshalled their most powerful forces in a campaign to keep women enslaved. Let's examine some of the participants in that charade. In the forefront of this hysterical campaign was, and is, the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The church and its hierarchy that today bring us the so-called "Right to Life" and the "fetus fetishists," is the same one that gave us the Spanish Inquisition, the same one that executed 5 million women as witches in the Middle Ages, and the same one which even today holds, as reiterated by Pope Paul, that women are somehow unfit for the priesthood.

Patriarchal religion functions to legitimate the sexual caste system, and all the other caste systems. The church has always upheld the existing social order. It defended monarchy, feudalism and even slavery as divinely ordained. Is it any wonder then that it upholds the slavery of women to their biology?

Then there's a sector of the medical profession, a group whose attitude towards women is best summed up by this quote from a physician who defines woman as "... a uterus surrounded by a supporting organism and a directing personality." We've only to remember the outcry in the 19th century from clergymen and doctors alike against the use of anesthesia to lessen the pain of childbirth to remember that these people do not have an unblemished record with respect to women.

HOW VICTORY WAS WON

We tend to forget that before the women's movement there was no controversy about abortion. There was private anguish, there was hidden torment, there were blasted lives, but there was no public controversy.

Abortions were illegal — men had declared them so, and millions of women accepted this unconstitutional infringement on their rights without question.

Before the women's movement, the Texas and Georgia suits would not have been brought, and had they been, no court, no matter how liberal, would have returned such a verdict.

How then was the victory won? What lessons can women in other countries learn from the Supreme Court decision?

The first thing is, no political body makes decisions in a vacuum. Legislators, judges, governors, are all influenced by public opinion. All the quiet behind-the-scenes lobbying in the so-called abortion reform movement, did nothing to change public opinion.

Public opinion on abortion was changed only when feminist women stood up in public and said, "Abortion is our Right" — when they stood up by the thousands in the streets, in the legislatures and in the courts.

Our victory was not won by working quietly behind the scenes. It wasn't won by preaching love thy enemies. It wasn't won because a few influential people agreed with us. It was won because we convinced millions of people that we were right.

When women took up the battle on their own behalf, when we thought the unthinkable, and said the unspeakable, then and only then did we defeat laws which for decades have degraded, mutilated and murdered women.

What we see here tonight is that Canadian women have also taken up the battle on their own behalf, and that is why I'm confident that before long your law will be struck down, and the threat of unwanted pregnancy that now hangs like a sword over your heads, will be removed.

Camus once said, "No army can withstand the force of an idea whose time has come." The time for women to control their own bodies has come, and no army, no government and no church will stop them.

labor Challenge #82 (July 1973) p. 1

Defend Dr. Morgentaler!

Women plan abortion tribunal

by BETH ROBERTSON

The June issue of Spokeswoman, the cross-Canada newspaper of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws, calls on all supporters of women's right to abortion to publicize and build the Tribunal on Abortion and Contraception, to be held Nov. 3 in Ottawa.

"Initiated by the second cross-Canada conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws (held March 16-18), and by the Front Commun pour l'Abrogation des Lois sur l'Avortement, the Tribunal will be a high-point for the abortion rights movement. Through the testimony of women from all backgrounds and experiences, and through the testimony of legal and medical experts, we will draw together the evidence necessary to indict those responsible for denying women control over their reproductive lives. The Tribunal will culminate in a demonstration to Parliament Hill to present our indictments and our demands to those responsible for this great injustice against women."

A tribunal is an ancient form of court, dating from the time of the Romans, convened in defense of the common people against arbitrary action by officials. The Tribunal on Abortion will revive this tradition with the women of Canada indicting the government for its crimes against women in maintaining the abortion laws.

The editorial in this issue of Spokeswoman describes the political context in which preparations for the Tribunal are taking place. It details the latest attacks by the government — Justice Minister Otto Lang's statement that the abortion laws should be interpreted much more strictly, and Prime Minister Trudeau's official meeting with a delegation from "Alliance for Life" to receive a petition from them. It mentions the stepped-up campaign of "Right to Life" groups across the country, including "large, after-church demonstrations" and ads placed in daily papers.

One of the most glaring examples of the government's reactionary and criminal policy is the victimization of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, a Montreal physician who faces possible life imprisonment because he chose to defy the criminal code in order to give women safe, medical abortions on request. The centerspread of **Spokeswoman** features a statement by Dr. Morgentaler, made at a March 16 public rally in Toronto, in which he declared in part, "I claim that my moral obligation and duty to my patients to save their lives and health transcends the dead letter of a law based on religious superstition and false premises . . . I do not believe that doing medically safe abortions is a criminal act. On the contrary, I feel very strongly that denying women safe abortions and exposing them to death and injury is criminal." Spokeswoman reports some of the public actions being carried across the country in defense of Dr. Morgentaler, and reprints the petition being circulated which calls for the charges against him to be dropped.

The campaign for the right to abortion has been an important part of the Canadian feminist movement since the Abortion Caravan in 1970, which brought women from across Canada to Ottawa. Increasingly around the world, the abortion struggle has emerged as a focus for the international struggle for women's rights.

As Spokeswoman points out, it is particularly important at this time, when the sides in the repeal fight are being defined more sharply, not only in Canada but around the world — that everyone who supports repeal of the abortion laws unite to make the Tribunal the largest, most significant action possible in opposition to the government's anti-abortion law.

Spokeswoman's editors conclude, "We were all inspired by the victory of women in the United States, who last January won abortion as their human right. We have seen the determined struggles of women around the world to gain control over their reproductive lives and have applauded the tens of thousands of women who have marched for that right in Belgium, and New Zealand. We must continue to carry out our fight in Canada in that same spirit and march forward like them . . . in building our own movement, toward our own victory."

To get involved in the Tribunal and activities leading up to it, contact the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws. Subscriptions to Spokeswoman are 7 ossues for $1. Send inquiries to P.O. Box 5673, Station A, Toronto, Ontario.

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300 Québécois defy abortion ban

On June 24, Quebec's national holiday, the front-page headline of Quebec-Presse, the popular trade union weekly, announced that 296 Quebecois had declared their "complicity" in procuring or undergoing an illegal abortion.

"The supporters of abortion on demand are passing from clandestinity to open struggle," wrote Micheline Lachance, introducing a special four-page supplement containing articles on the struggle for repeal of the abortion laws and the first release of signatures on a petition of "accomplices" being circulated by the Front Commun pour l'Abrogation des Lois sur l'Avortement (Common Front for Repeal of Abortion Laws). Those supporting repeal include leading personalities from all walks of Quebec life, including doctors (Lise Fortier, Henry Morgentaler, Maurice Jobin and Jacques Ferron), entertainers (Pauline Julien, Genevieve Bujold) and TV hostesses (Lise Payette).

"We the undersigned declare that we have helped someone in some way (references, advice, information, etc.) to obtain an illegal abortion and/ or have undergone an illegal abortion. We thereby incriminate ourselves in solidarity," the petition reads.

"If so many Quebecois are struggling for repeal of the abortion laws," states Quebec-Presse, "it is because the situation is urgent: in 1972, according to Statistics Canada, there were 1,386 therapeutic abortions in Quebec. Add to this the some 250 illegal abortions practiced each week by doctors as well as an unknown number of pregnancy terminations practiced by back-street butchers."

Of 210 accredited hospitals in Quebec, only 23 have created abortion committees as provided by the law, and only 12 of these are French-language hospitals.

A study of Quebecoises who have had an abortion, conducted by the Family Planning Center in 1972, found that 95 percent were unable to obtain a termination of pregnancy in a hospital. They paid an average of $300 each for their abortions.

Quebec-Presse lists a wide range of Quebec organizations which have called for repeal of the abortion laws. These include the Montreal Labor Council (CLC), the Professional Union of Quebec Teachers, the Union of Dieticians, the Federation of Engineers and Technicians (CSN), and many women's organizations.

A recent poll of psychologists, social workers and welfare councillors in Quebec found overwhelming support for repeal, with 80 percent saying that the final decision on abortion should be left to the woman alone.

The association of French-language doctors of Canada recently sent a questionnaire on abortion to its 8,649 members. Of those who responded, 26 percent favored abortion on demand.

The Front Commun (FCALA) is now circulating a petition asking doctors to declare their "complicity" in abortion. Already some 20 doctors have signed, their names to be published shortly.

Each issue of Quebec-Presse publishes the petition of the Front Commun in support of abortion law repeal. As of March, 12,000 Quebecois had signed it.

A recent photo-feature told the newspaper's 100,000 subscribers about Dr. Henry Morgentaler's abortion clinic in Montreal and his struggle against frameup by the government for violating the anti-abortion laws.

'MORGENTALER NOT GUILTY' say Montreal women protesting charges laid against doctor for performing abortions.

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NDP convention

Caucus campaigns for women's rights

by RACHEL WOODHOUSE
and JACQUIE HENDERSON

VANCOUVER — When the resolution calling for a cross-country conference of NDP women to be held within a year came on the convention floor, women delegates were in line 10 deep behind all of the four floor microphones. The atmosphere in the convention hall was excited and expectant. This was the opening of the debate on women's rights — a debate which soon became the highlight of the four-day convention in spite of the attempts of convention planners to keep the topic off the floor.

Yvonne Cocke, third vice-president of the B.C. NDP, kicked off the debate by saying that at the last federal NDP convention she rose to speak against a similar resolution. "I said then that I don't need an abortion; I have a job with equal pay; I don't have any problems. But in the meantime I have found that women in this country do have problems and the people of Canada are not addressing themselves to these problems — and neither is this party!"

"We have passed resolution after resolution paying lip service to things we feel should happen for women, so we think the job is done," she continued. "I am here to tell you that they are not happening. If they are then how come we still don't have day care in the provinces that are headed by socialist governments?"

Her comments urging support for the women's conference resolution were interrupted several times by cheering and clapping.

Vancouver delegate Hilda Thomas pointed out that women have to organize in order to achieve any real gains and that the conference would help make it possible for women to do precisely that.

Eleanor O'Connor, a delegate from Toronto and a member of the Federal Council of the NDP, moved to refer the resolution, objecting to the fact that the resolution didn't define the conferene as delegated and open to men as well as women. This referral, aimed at removing the motion from the floor, was soundly defeated after a strong statement of support for the conference by B.C. Health minister Dennis Cocke. Women's rights, he said is "one of the most vital questions facing our party today. If we are not now in favor of creating a women's movement in this party, it's about time we should be."

The conference resolution was passed by a large and cheering majority.

The next motion, calling for the hiring of a women's organizer "to aid and promote NDP policy for women and to develop liaison with other women's groups," was also passed.

SPECIAL DEBATE AT NEXT CONVENTION

A third resolution, for at least one-half day of discussion of women's rights at the next federal convention, generated strong opposition. Speaking for the resolution, Varda Kidd of Toronto drew the attention of the delegates to the fact that women have been fighting in the party for six years to have a discussion of women's rights.

One woman who opposed the resolution because she considered herself "already of equal status to men" because she is an NDP member, said she feared the motion would allow "an extremist debate that will drive half our party out of this hall."

When the vote was taken the chairman declared it lost. But Marilyn Jones (Toronto-Broadview) called for a standing vote which registered the motion carried, 403 for to 345 against. The announcement of the vote was greeted by tumultuous applause.

SUPPORT DR. MORGENTALER

While the chairman was trying to bring the convention to order and move off the women's rights resolutions to the next order of business, Joyce Meissenheimer (Burnaby-Seymour) moved that discussion be held on the resolution calling for a defense campaign for Dr. Morgentaler and that MP Grace MacInnis be allowed to speak on this question. The momentum of the previous victories carried over and MacInnis was allowed to take the mike. (See article this issue.)

The final mobilization of women's caucus took place the following day when a resolution entitled "Family Life" came to the floor. This resolution was initially scheduled to take up part of the time allotted to women's rights and substitute for all women's rights resolutions except the one on the conference.

Burris Devanney, chairman of the resolutions subcommittee which dealt with women's rights (along with "miscellaneous"), came to the first women's caucus meeting to justify the "Family Life" resolution. He explained to the 120 women present that he was the author of this "composite" resolution. It had been written, he said because there wasn't the "input" by constituencies. The women protested that there were 19 women's rights resolutions, that this one didn't resemble any of them, and moreover wasn't about women's rights at all.

Devanney agreed that the resolution was as much a "man's

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photo by Isolde Belfont

WOMEN'S CAUCUS MEETING. Feminists challenged NDP to fight for the demands of the women's liberation movement.

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resolution" as a "woman's". This, he said, was one of its virtues. He went on to make it quite clear that none of the 19 resolutions would come to the floor unless he and his subcommittee happened to agree with them. For instance, resolutions calling for support of Dr. Morgentaler were given a low priority while one opposing women's right to abortion got a high rating.

Further, he explained, his committee could "see no sense" in introducing resolutions relating to existing party policy — in spite of the fact that none of the existing women's rights, policy has been campaigned for or implemented by the party.

When the women's caucus participants couldn't take this male chauvinist arrogance quietly, and responded angrily with comments and questions, one woman rose to defend Devanney. Eleanor O'Connor told the caucus, "You are the rudest group of people I have ever met."

photo by Werner Steinmetz

Hilda Thomas

'FAMILY LIFE' IS NOT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Hilda Thomas expressed the caucus's anger when she told Devanny, "This is most unjust! 'Family Life' is not women's rights. I feel very angry that our time should be used for this resolution. It is an insult. The Morgentaler resolution concerns one of the most vital questions we face. But simply because the committee disagrees with it they have given it a low priority so it won't come up. This is most undemocratic."

The caucus rejected the "Family Life" resolution as a women's resolution and demanded that no time be allowed for it under the women's rights item on the convention agenda. The caucus also decided to demand at least one hour's debate on five women's rights resolutions. The resolutions concerned the cross-country NDP women's conference, defense of Dr. Morgentaler, appointment of the organizer, a special debate on women's issues at the 1975 convention, an NDP commission on women, and support for abortion law repeal.

When the "Family Life" resolution was introduced at the end of the convention on Sunday, the caucus was unable to mobilize enough support to get it referred, although much opposition was expressed.

Marily Sarti of Vancouver moved the referral motion with specific instructions for deletions and additions. She proposed the first paragraph, which included such statements as "It is not unnatural for mothers to want to work outside the home," be deleted; that references to marriage be deleted throughout; to amend the resolution to allow for salaries for parents to remain home any time through the child's life, not just the first few months; to add the demand for 24-hour child care; and to delete statements which imply that children are possessions of parents, and replace them with a statement upholding the rights of children as individuals.

Mary Trew of Toronto elaborated the attack on the resolution, calling it "inadequate to say the least." It represented a "backtracking on party policy," she argued, pointing out that it "contradicts motions passed yesterday." Trew explained that much of the motivation in the preamble "is entirely unacceptable. It cuts against the entire thrust of the women's movement. Women can no longer be defined simply through their relationships with their husbands and children." She concluded that while paying lip service to freedom of choice, "this resolution doesn't challenge the economic compulsion that is the very basis of the family."

Cynthia Flood, a Vancouver delegate, supported the referral motion. While some of the specific recommendations of the resolution were acceptable, she argued the whole tone of it was extremely patronizing. Moreover there were "glaring gaps" in the recommendations, most notably no reference to 24-hour child care and no mention of abortion services under proposed neighborhood health clinics. Flood also noted that the resolution refused to recognize the existence and the rights of single parents, homosexual men and women, and children themselves, and that it implied that the conventional nuclear family structure was the only valid form of group life.

The referral was defeated and the main motion passed, but the response from delegates indicated clearly that many were dissatisfied with the position taken.

MILITANT FEMINIST GROUP

The women's caucus was a well-organized militant feminist group which successfully challenged the leadership's well-oiled convention machine. It had three large meetings during the convention. At the first, a "strategy committee" of ten women was struck off to lead the intervention on the floor. After the caucus meetings, leaflets were produced reporting on the decisions of the meeting and urging delegates to support them.

Unlike at some previous conventions, no one in the caucus raised limiting the group to strictly "socialist women" or to some other select group. All women at the convention who wanted to fight for women's rights were encouraged to attend. Participants included

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women from many different political viewpoints.

The caucus endorsed nine women candidates for the federal executive and council on the basis of their stated support for the aims of the caucus. In most cases they received a large minority of the vote. But only two of the women, Joyce Nash, for vice-president and Betty McClurg, federal council, who were also on the slate of the party brass, were elected.

The final caucus meeting at the convention heard reports from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario — representatives from Manitoba and Quebec having to leave the meeting early. Joan Campana reported on the background to the Morgentaler case as well as on the Tribunal on Abortion called for Nov. 3 in Ottawa by the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws and le Front Commun pour l'Abrogation des Lois sur l'Avortement. And Eleanor Pelrine reported on the founding of a group, the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Laws (CARAL).

The meeting voted to make the defense of Dr. Morgentaler one of its ongoing projects and to elect a cross-country steering committee to help plan the NDP women's conference, make recommendations for the women's organizer, etc. Approximately two dozen women were elected with Joyce Meissenheimer chosen as chairwoman. One of the first tasks of the committee will be broadening it to include women from provinces underrepresented at the convention.

The activities of the women's caucus at this convention represent a big step forward for the women's movement as a whole. Through the struggle many women learned important lessons about the need to unite and organize in order to achieve even modest victories.

The determination shown by the women and the strong feeling of sisterhood gained through the struggle — reflected in the women's caucus meetings and the innumerable informal meetings and discussions throughout the convention — made it clear that the organized women's movement within the NDP is going to be a force to be reckoned with for the party's conservative and bureaucratic leadership.

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NDP convention

Pledge defense for abortion law victim

by JACQUIE HENDERSON

VANCOUVER — The resolutions committee gave the motion a "low priority" rating, thus hindering it from getting to the floor of the convention. The chairman ruled it out of order, claiming that all the time for debate of women's rights issues was used up.

And yet Grace MacInnis, MP (Vancouver- Kingsway) **did** get to speak on the resolution calling for defense of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, a Montreal physician charged under the abortion section of the Criminal Code of Canada. And the convention **did** vote overwhelmingly to adopt the sentiments of her speech which were to "do all we can to come to the defense of this courageous doctor."

This decision climaxed a heated debate on women's rights in which three other resolutions furthering the feminist struggle were adopted. Following the third and last scheduled motion, Joyce Meissenheimer, a Vancouver delegate, asked for the indulgence of the chair to hear from the NDP's one woman MP on the resolution concerning the case of Dr. Morgentaler."

When the chairman replied there was no time, the convention reacted strongly. Party leader David Lewis then intervened to call on the chair to allow Grace MacInnis to speak for ten minutes.

MacInnis compared the case of Dr. Morgentaler to that of an Ottawa social worker charged 40 years ago with having broken a provision in the Criminal Code that prohibited distribution of birth control information.

"The forces of reaction and the Establishment were unleashed against the social worker. But she was aquitted and later the section under which she was prosecuted was removed from the Criminal Code.

"Today abortion is in exactly the same position. It is in the Criminal Code and we say it should come out. The same people who were responsible for the social worker's prosecution now are responsible for piling up the unnecessary toll of illegal abortions.

"Dr. Morgentaler is someone who couldn't bear to pass by on the other side when confronted by the fact that women were suffering misery and mutilation and death. Dr. Morgentaler went ahead and did abortions. Today he is facing charges under the Criminal Code. . ."

She concluded by calling on the convention to "come to the defense of this courageous doctor."

The delegates rose to their feet in a standing ovation. When the chair called for a vote on the sentiments expressed by MacInnis the overwhelming majority voted in favor.

The vote signified a big victory for delegates who had been organizing on this question throughout the convention. By prosecuting Dr. Morgentaler the government has made his case a focus for the struggle between those forces trying to block women from having any control of their bodies and lives,

photo by Werner Steinmetz

Grace MacInnis

trying to bring about even stricter enforcement of the abortion laws, and those defending him, who are struggling to make abortion a woman's right to choose.

This confrontation was obvious at the NDP convention. Members of anti-abortion "Right to Life" groups distributed glossy brochures with large pictures of fetuses. They lobbied delegates, urging them to wear buttons displaying a fetus and the words, "hang in there BABY." A resolution calling for "reexamination" of the NDP policy on repeal to take into account the "rights" of fetuses and responsible fathers was allocated a higher priority that the pro-Morgentaler resolutions. Moreover the convention's resolutions committee was recommending concurrence with the reactionary resolution.

But participants in the women's caucus lobbied delegates strenuously and harassed the resolutions committee to get the defense of Morgentaler on the convention floor. In addition an appeal calling for a widespread defense was circulated. The appeal noted that "it has for several years been the policy of the NDP to call for repeal of abortion from the Criminal Code. Our 1971 convention passed a motion instructing an NDP government, when elected, to pardon all qualified medical practictioners convicted under section 237 or section 150 of the Criminal Code, and drop the current prosecutions under those sections."

Among the delegates who signed the appeal were: Rosemary Brown, B.C. MLA; Dennis Cocke, B.C. minister of Health; Yvonne Cocke, third vice-president, B.C. NDP; Melodie Corrigall, Chairwoman, B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee; Colin Gableman, B.C. MLA; George Johnston, president, B.C. Federation of Labor; Stephen Lewis, leader of the Ontario NDP; Grace MacInnis, MP; and Eleanor Pelrine, author of Abortion in Canada.

The Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws staffed an information booth in the lobby outside the convention hall. Displayed there was a large banner reading "Defend Dr. Morgentaler — Drop the Charges!" Over 300 buttons with the same message were sold to delegates.

About 400 brochures explaining the Morgentaler case and over 300 copies of Spokeswomen, the newspaper of the Canadian Women's Coalition, were sold. At the beginning of the convention, ~~every~~ delegate was given a copy of a leaflet explaining the facts of the case, including the recent charges laid against Dr. Yvan Machabee, an associate of Dr. Morgentaler.

Material explaining the Tribunal on Abortion, a popular court to indict the real criminals, the government and all the other upholders of the present restrictive abortion law was also distributed. Forty-five delegates at the convention became endorsers of the Tribunal including a number of MPs, MLAs, lawyers, teachers, social workers, students, broadcasters; one NDP constituency organization and a women's theatre group.

The women's caucus at the convention adopted as one of its ongoing projects building the Morgentaler defense campaign across the country.

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Diversion for feminists

'Women's ministry' - debate in B.C. NDP

THE CASE FOR A MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS. Published by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the New Democratic Party of British Columbia, 1881 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C. 50 cents.

by JACQUIE HENDERSON

This collection of articles and speeches is the first pamphlet produced by the B.C. NDP women's rights committee. As the introduction points out, the articles in it are "among the products of one of the most remarkable political phenomena of the 20th century" the development of a world-wide feminist movement.

The B.C. committee is itself a remarkable product of the new feminist radicalization. Formed in 1971 and open to all women in the NDP in B.C., it has inspired the organization of women inside and outside the party throughout the whole province. It produces a monthly newsletter, Priorities, which is widely circulated among feminists and NDPers. The committee has helped to organize a number of conferences and sent feminist speakers to a wide range of meetrings.

It has supported the aims of various struggles of women including the sit-in last winter which demanded child care facilities from the government and won small concessions, and the strike by workers, mainly women, at Shoppers Drug Mart stores. Last July the B.C. committee initiated the organization of a women's caucus at the federal NDP convention.

Because of the prominent role that the B.C. women's rights committee has played in organizing women, this pamphlet will be widely read by women across the country who want to learn how to organize to end their oppression.

Unfortunately, they aren't going to find many of the answers they need in this pamphlet.

The pamphlet does not reflect the wide range of activities of the NDP women's rights committee, or of the independent women's movement as a whole. It does not focus on the Barrett government's refusal to implement the wide-ranging program of women's rights adopted by the last convention of the B.C. New Democratic Party. Rather, its theme is the proposal for a "Ministry of Women's Rights" adopted at this convention.

JACQUIE HENDERSON. Author is organizer of Vancouver LSA.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

Premier Barrett told reporters at the time of the convention that his government would make establishment of such a ministry a "low priority." His statement has become famous as a symbol of the government's contemptuous rejection of the broad program of legislation for women's rights proposed by the convention.

While it was opposed by those such as Barrett who fear giving any recognition to the special oppression of women, the resolution itself was a very modest proposal. It read:

"Therefore be it resolved that the 1972 Provincial Convention of the NDP call for the establishment of a Ministry of Women's Rights in the next sitting of the Legislature, to work with other Departments on all issues affecting women directly, including relevant aspects of labor legislation, child care, health and welfare, education, and other areas of similar concern; that this Ministry be headed by a woman; and that the selection of this Minister be made after consultation with the Women's Committee of the NDP."

The resolution did not demand that the government enact any new legislation. It did not demand that the government do anything other than set up another ministry which it explicitly described as being integrated into the existing bureaucratic framework of the government and state apparatus.

And yet the two main articles in the pamphlet are entitled, "A Ministry of Women's Rights — A breakthrough for the women's movement" and "A Ministry of Women's Rights — A structural solution." The titles accurately reflect the content of these articles authored by Melodie Corrigall and Sharon Yandle, respectively. The authors, who consider themselves feminists and socialists, project the ministry as more than a demand — they see it as a central part of a strategy for the feminist movement.

They make a number of correct points that women's oppression is not an aberration but rather a fundamental aspect of capitalism — that it is built into the system as is poverty and oppression in general; that the struggle for women's liberation is therefore bound up in the struggle to change society; that it is not enough to support equality for women in the abstract — special measures are required to help women overcome their subordinate status. Both writers also express no confidence in the Barrett government to bring forth any measures to meet women's needs, in spite of the fact that the B.C. party has adopted a number of the key feminist demands. A way must be found to make the government act on these demands, they state.

WOMEN'S POWER?

While Yandle is careful to state that the ministry cannot bring about an end to social inequality of women and in that sense is not a "solution," she does see it as the next big step towards that end. She says that it can "provide women with the tools to begin the systematic elimination of the root causes of oppression."

They advocate the Women's Ministry as a short cut to women getting some "power."

But, in fact, this approach represents a dangerous detour for the feminist movement, one which could disarm it of its only real power.

Both Yandle and Corrigall imply

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that a women's ministry will not be like the other ministries in the government. But both of them are arguing in favor of the NDP convention resolution which is quite clear: the women's ministry will be part of the government apparatus; it will "work with other (government) departments," i.e. it will be interlocked with them; it will not have any autonomous power to draft new legislation affecting women.

Both see the ministry as a means of giving women "power." Yandle says, "It is a very important means of stimulating and encouraging women to break through the barriers that confine them to a socially inferior status by giving them power — the finances, resources and authority to start breaking those barriers down." Corrigall refers to the ministry as a "body with power."

But how would such a ministry give women "power?" The demand for a ministry lends credence to illusions that women can win their rights through a change in governmental structures. It encourages concepts that power can be gained in some way other than by building the feminist movement through independent struggles around concrete demands, when the entire experience of the women's movement to date proves the opposite.

They do not even link the setting up of the ministry to the achievement of any of the concrete demands of the women's rights movement. Rather they seem to view its establishment as a precondition for a successful struggle to achieve such gains. This view is a dangerous diversion. By focussing on a structural change, the demand for a ministry tends to ease the pressure on the government to enact specific reforms of benefit to women. In this sense, it lets Barrett, Trudeau and Co. off the hook.

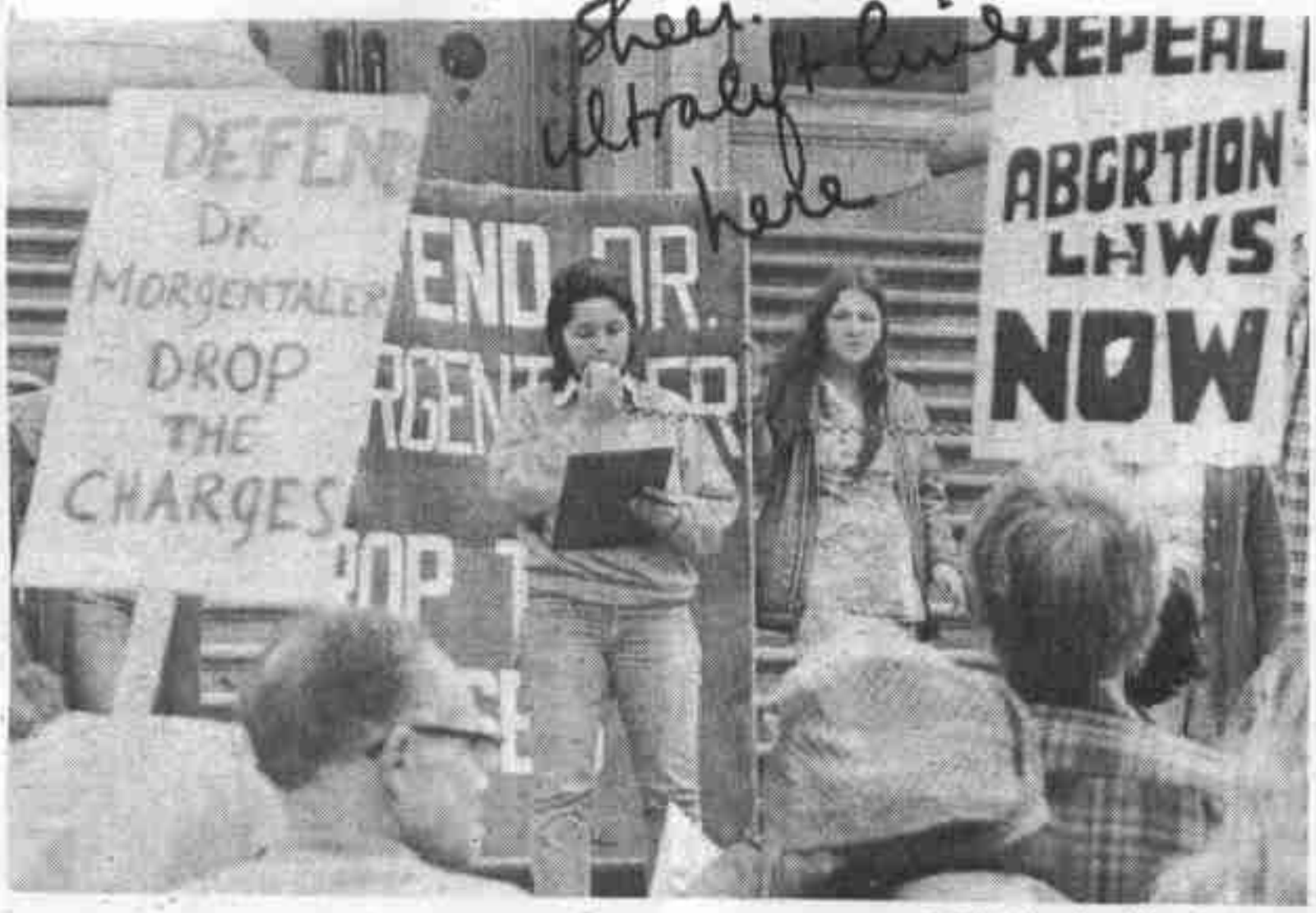

photo by Isolde Belfont

B.C. FEMINISTS must bring NDP actively behind struggle for women's right to abortion. Above, Vancouver demonstrators in defense of Dr. Morgentaler, accused Montreal abortionist. Speaker is Coreen Douglas of Canadian Women's Coalition for Repeal of Abortion Laws.

THE WAY FORWARD

Both Yandle and Corrigall point out that the government male-dominated bureaucracy cannot understand women's problems or move to solve them. But the remedy they suggest is faulty. The solution does not lie in the establishment of new ministries, staffed by women. Governmental structures like ministries are designed to carry out government policy. What is decisive is the character of the government and its policies, not who staffs its departments.

That is why the key fight for women, even in a province with an NDP government, is to win concrete policies that would aid women. In B.C., a big step in this direction could be made by forcing the government to implement the concrete measures in the women's rights program adopted at the last provincial NDP convention.

In a deeper sense, feminists must also come to understand that the state apparatus — the government bureaucracy, the police and the courts — cannot be taken over by women and used to advance their struggle. The state is an institution in the hands of the ruling class, specifically designed to perpetuate the system of oppression and exploitation. As such, its basic character cannot be altered by changes in structure or personnel. It must be replaced in the process of a revolutionary transformation of society, a socialist revolution.

The women's liberation movement can be a powerful force in the socialist revolution. But of course women cannot make such a revolution by themselves. To succeed, we must ally with the working class in anticapitalist struggle.

The power of struggles for women's rights, the strength of the women's liberation movement, and its independence from the ruling class and its institutions, are crucial factors in propelling this broader anticapitalist struggle forward.

The pamphlet's theme, the campaign for a women's ministry, represents a false course for the women's rights committee.

It should take another course, that of participating in and helping to

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photo by Isolde Belfont

ROSEMARY BROWN, right, member of B.C. legislature and active supporter of NDP women's rights committee, walks picket-line with striking Shoppers Drug Mart workers, many of whom are women.

lead the feminist movement as a whole in struggle, bringing the full presure of this movement to bear on the Barrett government in order to force it to implement those concrete policies which meet women's needs. Many important measures are already outlined in the B.C. NDP program which includes 24-hour child care, a province-wide network of abortion clinics, enforcement of equal pay for women.

Feminists must look for opportunities to take this program off the shelf and organize women around these demands. Women can reach out beyond the feminist movement in the course of these campaigns to involve masses of women who have not yet taken action and to pressure the labor movement to actively support these campaigns.

Last winter's child-care struggle provided a good example of one possible campaign. And, although limited in the forces it was able to unite in struggle against the government, it managed to force the government to make a small concession. The government could have been pushed much farther if women throughout the province had been mobilized behind this struggle — if the NDP women's committee had taken an active role in leading this mobilization. Much bigger concessions could have been wrung out of the government if the labor movement had been mobilized behind the campaign.

The government must act now. A massive and innovative child care program to meet the needs of all women regardless of income must be initiated. The government must proceed to set up abortion clinics throughout the province, equipped with the most modern techniques, where safe, legal abortions would be available to women without red tape or discrimination. The government, one of the largest employers in the province, must change its policies and become a model in hiring, promotion and payment of women workers.

In its first year in office, the NDP government has failed to legislate any of these policies. It has shown it will not implement these demands unless forced to do so by strong and organized women's movement. The Women's Rights Committee must reject the deadend strategy proposed by Yandle and Corrigall and spearhead campaigns demanding concrete legislation — now.

labor Challenge #86 (Sept. 1973)

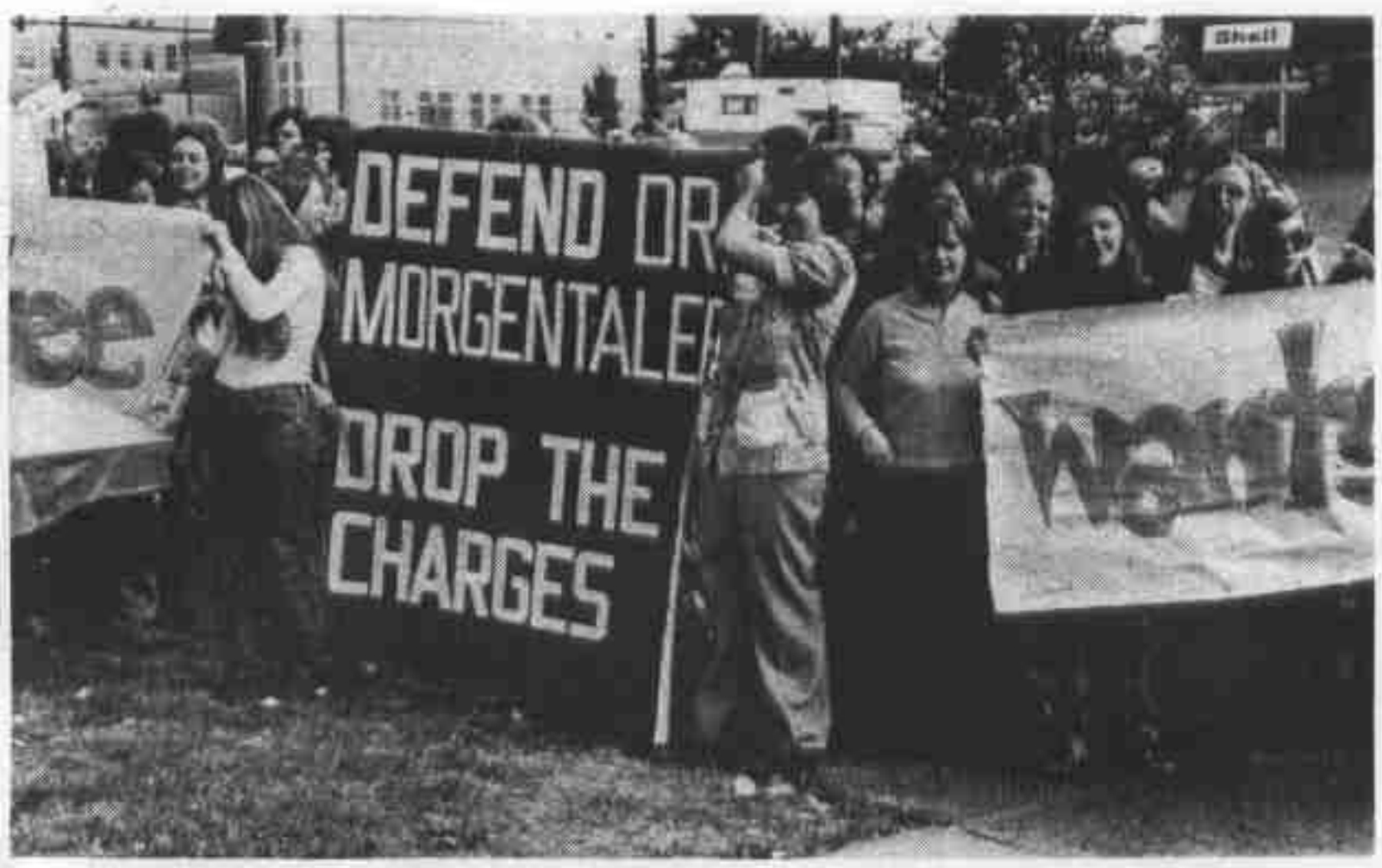
Trial begins Sept. 24

Support builds for Dr. Morgentaler

by BETH ROBERTSON

On Sept. 24, Dr. Henry Morgentaler will begin trial on the first of thirteen charges laid against him under the abortion section of the Criminal Code. Defense actions, including meetings, pickets, demonstrations, etc., are being organized around this date across Canada by newly-formed defense committees and other supporters of Dr. Morgentaler and Dr. Yvan Macchabee, another Montreal physician facing similar charges. Already, actions are planned in Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal.

The formation of defense committees across the country and the subsequent organization of defense actions is important to the outcome of Dr. Morgentaler's trial. With a powerful, broad campaign behind him, demanding that the charges be dropped, Dr. Morgentaler can walk out of that Montreal courtroom with a victory for himself and the entire abortion rights movement. Without it, he will face life imprisonment and the enemies of women's right to control their lives will have won a major victory.



'DEFEND DR. MORGENTALER,' was one demand raised by Sept. 8 demonstration of B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee.

The response to the Aug. 31 call from Montreal for supporters of the two doctors to organize a cross-country campaign in their defense, has been impressive.

On Sept. 11, at a meeting of 300 people in Montreal, a broad French language defense committee was launched to defend Drs. Morgentaler and Macchabee. Participants overwhelmingly adopted "drop the charges" as the main demand of the campaign.

Among those attending the meeting were representatives from the Front Commun pour L'Abrogation des Lois sur L'Avortement (Common Front for Repeal of the Abortion Laws), Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), Quebec Teachers' Union (CEQ), Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere (LSO), Montreal Labor Council of the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) and the Centre des Femmes (Women's Center). Prominent TV and radio personalities participated.

The meeting also endorsed repeal of thé abortion laws and free abortion and contraception on demand. A steering committee of 12 people was elected to coordinate defense activities, the first of which will take place on Sept. 24.

An English language defense committee was also launched in Montreal two days later.

In Ottawa, following a successful press conference the previous day, a defense committee was launched on Sept. 13 by a meeting of 50 people, representing organizations such as the Humanists, the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws (CWC), ARCAL and the Women's Center.

MPs Grace MacInnis and Stuart Leggatt, both of whom have Private Member's bills for repeal of abortion laws from the criminal code pending in the House, have indicated their support for the defense committee. Peter Reilly, a Conservative MP and staunch Roman Catholic, has offered full support to the campaign and attended both the press conference and founding meeting of the Ottawa defense committee. Reilly's strong anti-abortion views changed radically after he saw photographs of women who died from self-induced or butcher abortions published recently in Ms magazine.

Plans are moving ahead for the formation of defense committees in other part of Canada. In Toronto, supporters will meet on Sept. 18. Recent Toronto endorsers of the defense campaign include broadcaster Pierre Berton; Esther Greenglass of the Liberal Task Force on the Status of Women; Grace Hartman of CUPE and a member of the Trudeau government's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. A cross-country conference of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and CUPE Local 251 in Oshawa, Ontario, have also endorsed the defense effort. A picket line and rally has been called for Sept. 22 by the Canadian Women's Coalition in Toronto.

The founding defense committee meeting in Vancouver, scheduled for Sept. 25, has already received broad support. New endorsers include the B.C. NDP provincial council and the B.C. NDP Women's Conference which was attended by women from more than 35 organizations.

Defense work has only just begun. Supporters must continue to spread the news of the Montreal doctors and the importance of their cases.

With a strong, visible campaign which mobilizes support from every part of the country, one message alone will reach those who now presume to dictate over the lives of women: DROP THE CHARGES, NOW!!!

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Rallies say 'drop the charges'

Trial of Dr. Morgentaler begins

by LIS ANGUS

As court proceedings against Dr. Henry Morgentaler began Sept. 24 in Montreal, support actions were held across the country, part of the growing public campaign demanding that charges against him be dropped.

Dr. Morgentaler faces 13 charges under the abortion section of the Criminal Code. If convicted, he is liable to life imprisonment.

As the court opened on Monday morning, 160 people participated in a spirited support picket outside the courtroom. Later in the day, another picket line drew 200 people, including a contingent organized by the Ottawa committee to defend Dr. Morgentaler.

Similar actions took place across Canada on or around that date. In Toronto, 120 supporters marched up Yonge St. on Sept. 22 chanting, "Morgentaler, Macchabee, drop the charges, set them free" and "Hey, hey, Choquette, Trudeau, drop the charges, let them go." They gathered at City Hall for a rally, undaunted by a sudden rainstorm.

The spirit of the rally was aptly summed up by Joan Campana, coordinator of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws, who co-chaired the rally together with lawyer Stan Gershman. "This is only the beginning," she said. "We need more actions like this across the country, and we have to build them much bigger than we are here today. It's people like us — who are willing to stand here in spite of the pouring rain, determined to build this campaign — that are going to carry through and win the dropping of the charges."

photo by Grant Hargrave

'MORGENTALER, MACCHABEE, drop the charges, set them free!' was one chant of Sept. 22 Toronto demonstration in defense of two Montreal doctors.

Actions were also held in Edmonton, Vancouver and Saskatoon. In Edmonton, a public meeting on the University of Alberta campus attracted 55-60 people, and formally launched the Edmonton defense committee. In Saskatoon, a lively rally of 30-35 people picketed outside the office of Federal Justice Minister Otto Lang.

In Vancouver, a Sept. 25 public meeting formed the B.C. Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler around the demand "Defend Dr. Morgen-

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What demands best defend Morgentaler?

by LIS ANGUS

What kind of campaign can best defend Dr. Morgentaler?

This question arises with the formation of defense committees across the country. It is most clearly posed in differences on the slogans of the campaign.

Everyone seems to agree that the central demand of the campaign should be to drop the charges against Dr. Morgentaler. But some people within the campaign have proposed additional demands which they feel the defense committees should adopt: in particular, the demand to repeal the abortion laws.

In the Montreal French-speaking defense committee, strong pressures for additional demands led to the adoption by the founding meeting of both "repeal" and "free abortion and contraception on demand," as well as "drop the charges." Similar pressures exist within the Ottawa committee.

What is at stake in this discussion?

It is clear that the defense of Dr. Morgentaler is closely related to the abortion rights struggle — in fact, he is being victimized primarily because of his part in that struggle. Certainly, if Dr. Morgentaler is convicted, it would be a terrible setback for the repeal campaign; and conversely, if he is successful — with the help of a Canada-wide public defense campaign — in turning back this attack by the Quebec courts, that victory will greatly undermine the Canadian abortion laws.

But to conclude therefore that the defense campaign should also call for repeal of the abortion laws, is to make a serious misjudgement as to the tasks and character of the defense campaign.

The main purpose of the defense campaign is to prevent the Quebec courts from convicting and sentencing Dr. Morgentaler (or other victims of the laws, such as Dr. Yvan Macchabee, who faces similar charges). The campaign's demands must express this clear political focus.

Those who argue in favor of adding the repeal demand seem to do so from two points of view: first, that the only way to get the charges dropped is to repeal the law; or second, that there is not much chance of achieving either so we may as well call for everything while we're at it.

Both these viewpoints suffer from a common error — underestimation of the power of a mass campaign to affect the course of this case.

The courts do not rule in isolation from the political life of Canada. They are the political instruments of the state — and operate in accordance with the relationship of class forces in society. They are affected by the same political factors that motivate the government to legislate either reforms or repressive measures relative to the strenth or weakness of the masses.

Moreover, the trial of Dr. Morgentaler is a political trial, and it is on the political level that the outcome of the case will ultimately be decided.

It is not true that the charges cannot be dropped before the anti-abortion laws are repealed. A mass public campaign in Dr. Morgentaler's defense could make it more costly for the government to proceed with the prosecution than to halt it. In that case, the Justice department would decide to drop the charges.

This is what happened to most of the charges laid under the War Measures Act of 1970. There, due to mass public sentiment (particularly in Quebec) spearheaded by a defense campaign, the government

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photo by Grant Hargrave

MASS ACTION on single slogan Drop the Charges, is best way to build defense of Dr. Morgentaler.

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Trial of Dr. Morgentaler begins

taler — Drop the charges." Speakers at the meeting included representatives from the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, the Humanists, the Unitarian Church, the B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee, the University of British Columbia Abortion Action Committee and the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws.

Defense committees have now been established in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver. They have begun the task of planning activities to publicize and expand the campaign, and to raise funds to carry these activities. The possibilities before the campaign were indicated by the experience of the Hamilton committee, which raised $400 in the first day of its existence.

The campaign is also becoming international. Members of the Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign organized a picket line in England outside Canada House, calling for the charges against Dr. Morgentaler to be dropped. The Women's Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) in the U.S. has sent a telegram to Quebec Justice Minister Choquette, with a similar message. Members of the American Humanist Association have initiated an International Defense Committee for Dr. Morgentaler.

This mounting public support may in part be responsible for the fact that the restrictions imposed on Dr. Morgentaler when he was released from jail have now been modified. He is now free to leave Montreal, and to participate in press conferences, although he is still prohibited from speaking on abortion.

During the first week of court proceedings in Montreal, Dr. Morgentaler's lawyers presented arguments for postponing the trial and quashing the indictments, arguing that the abortion law under which he is charged is unconstitutional. Ruling must be made on these attempts to delay the proceedings before a further schedule for the trial will be announced.

Defense lawyers have managed to win severance of the charges — meaning that Dr. Morgentaler will be tried on each charge separately, rather than on the charges grouped together — and the right to a French-speaking jury, which they feel would tend to be less prejudiced against the case.

But it is not the events inside the courtroom which will be decisive in this case, but those outside: a broad public defense campaign which can mobilize mass pressure to force the Quebec Justice department to drop the charges against Dr. Morgentaler.

What demands best defend Morgentaler?

found itself unable to proceed with prosecution of most of those arrested. The overwhelming majority of those arrested were never charged. And charges were subsequently dropped or suspended against most of those accused even though the government had the War Measures Act and its replacement, the Public Order Act, on which to base its prosecutions.

To build the broadest possible support for the Morgentaler defense campaign, its demands must be clear and simple, stating clearly what the goal of the campaign is, and placing no additional conditions on what people must agree with to join the campaign.

So far, the campaign is still relatively narrow. It has mobilized support only from within sections of the repeal movement. But that is its weakness, not its strength. Every attempt should be made to gain support and active participation from those forces still outside the repeal movement — for example, those who call for reform of the laws, or those who have not yet taken a stand on the laws.

But the main question is not the composition, but the focus of the campaign. Experience shows that the most effective campaign — the one that can unite the broadest forces — is one centered on a single issue and built around clear, easily-understood demands.

This is not a campaign of moral solidarity. It must be a campaign of action, with a specified goal.

A victory for Dr. Morgentaler will objectively advance the movement for repeal, by making it more difficult for the government to enforce its repressive anti-women laws.

Thus, defense of Dr. Morgentaler, built around the demand "Drop the Charges," is top priority for abortion repeal activists today. Not only the fate of a courageous doctor, but in many ways the future of the abortion rights movement, rest on the success of this defense campaign.

It must be as effective and forceful a campaign as we can make it.

labor Challenge

#92 (Dec. 1973) p.1

Dr. Henry Morgentaler:

'Acquittal a tremendous victory

The following interview with Dr. Henry Morgentaler took place in Toronto Nov. 28, just before he addressed a Town Hall meeting of more than 500 people co-sponsored by the Toronto Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler. The interviewer for Labor Challenge was Lis Angus.

Dr. Morgentaler, a prominent and outspoken supporter of the struggle to win women's right to abortion, was acquitted Nov. 13 of a charge of performing an illegal abortion. This acquittal was front-page news right across the country, and has rekindled a raging controversy on the future of Canada's restrictive abortion law. Women's groups, and Dr. Morgentaler himself, have declared the acquittal to be a victory for women. However, the battle is far from over: the Crown is appealing the acquittal to a higher court, and Dr. Morgentaler still faces trial on twelve remaining charges of a similar nature.

* * *

Question: How do you see the significance of your acquittal?

Answer. I'm not sure I can answer that — my bail conditions impose certain restrictions on me.

Q. All right. Why don't we start, then, by outlining the restrictions you are under.

A. I am not allowed to speak either about the twelve charges which have not yet come to trial, or about the case which has been tried and which is now being appealed. I also may not give press conferences, or be interviewed on radio or television. But they forgot to tell me not to speak to representatives of the press individually — which I am doing — or not to speak at public meetings — which I am also doing.

But further on the significance of the acquittal — I don't believe that even if the acquittal is upheld, the recognition of Article 45 will make much difference. (The defense was based on Article 45 of the Criminal Code, which protects a doctor from prosecution if a surgical procedure was carried out with "reasonable care and skill" and for the health of the patient — Ed.) The onus is still on the doctor to prove that Article 45 applies — he has to face prosecution, a trial, a possible jail sentence, and the stress attendant on all of these. I don't forsee that many more doctors will do abortions under these conditions.

What would make a difference is to repeal the abortion law altogether, and to establish specialized abortion clinics across the country. This is why I offered my clinic to the provincial government to train doctors and nurses in the newest and safest methods of abortion.

Q. How do you see that your case — and the acquittal — relate to the general struggles for women's rights?

A. The acquittal was a tremendous victory. An all-French jury — all of them Catholics — basically agreed with the proposition that an abortion done by a doctor in the interests of a patient is not subject to the law. It was a recognition that abortion is a private matter not subject to the law.

I also think it shows the emancipation of the French Canadian masses from the yoke of the Catholic church and its dogmatic values. I think it is a sign of the tremendous loss of power which the Catholic church is beginning to suffer.

Q. What do you think of the "right to life" groups and the role played by the Catholic church in supporting the anti-abortion campaign, and in particular their attacks on you personally?

A. I respect people opposed to abortion on personal and religious grounds. They should practice what they preach on themselves. They should not try to impose their decision on others. I have only contempt for the lunatic fringe — the fanatics who want to impose their brand of intolerance, their so-called philosophy, on all people of Canada.

Q. What do you think of the role of the government in relation to your prosecution and in relation to abortion rights in general?

A. The government is under pressure from what I call the CCP's — the "Crusaders for Compulsory Pregnancy."

The government has shown a callous disregard for the rights of women; its indifference to the suffering of women borders on the criminal. The federal government has direct moral responsibility for the deaths, injuries and anguish suffered by women in Canada who are unable to obtain legal abortions and are exposed to the dangers attendant upon either late abortion (caused by red tape and legal restrictions) or back-alley abortions.

It is high time that progressive forces make it clear that the majority of Canadians are in favor of repeal of the laws and will not forgive the government for not acting.

Q. What kind of support have you been receiving?

A. I have been getting tremendous support from all over the country. There are Morgentaler defense committees in all major cities. I have been getting support from the NDP, from some MP's and doctors, from women's groups, and from organizations like the Humanists and the Unitarians.

- I have also received some international support. There is an international defense committee, founded by members of the American Humanist Association.

Q. What has been the response of doctors to your case?

A. Mostly favorable. I have received many telegrams of support from doctors . . . many of course are unwilling to take public positions, but many are active in the defense committees and working for repeal.

Q. When you declared publicly in March of this year, at the conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition to Repeal the Abortion Laws, that you had been performing abortions, what did you hope to achieve?

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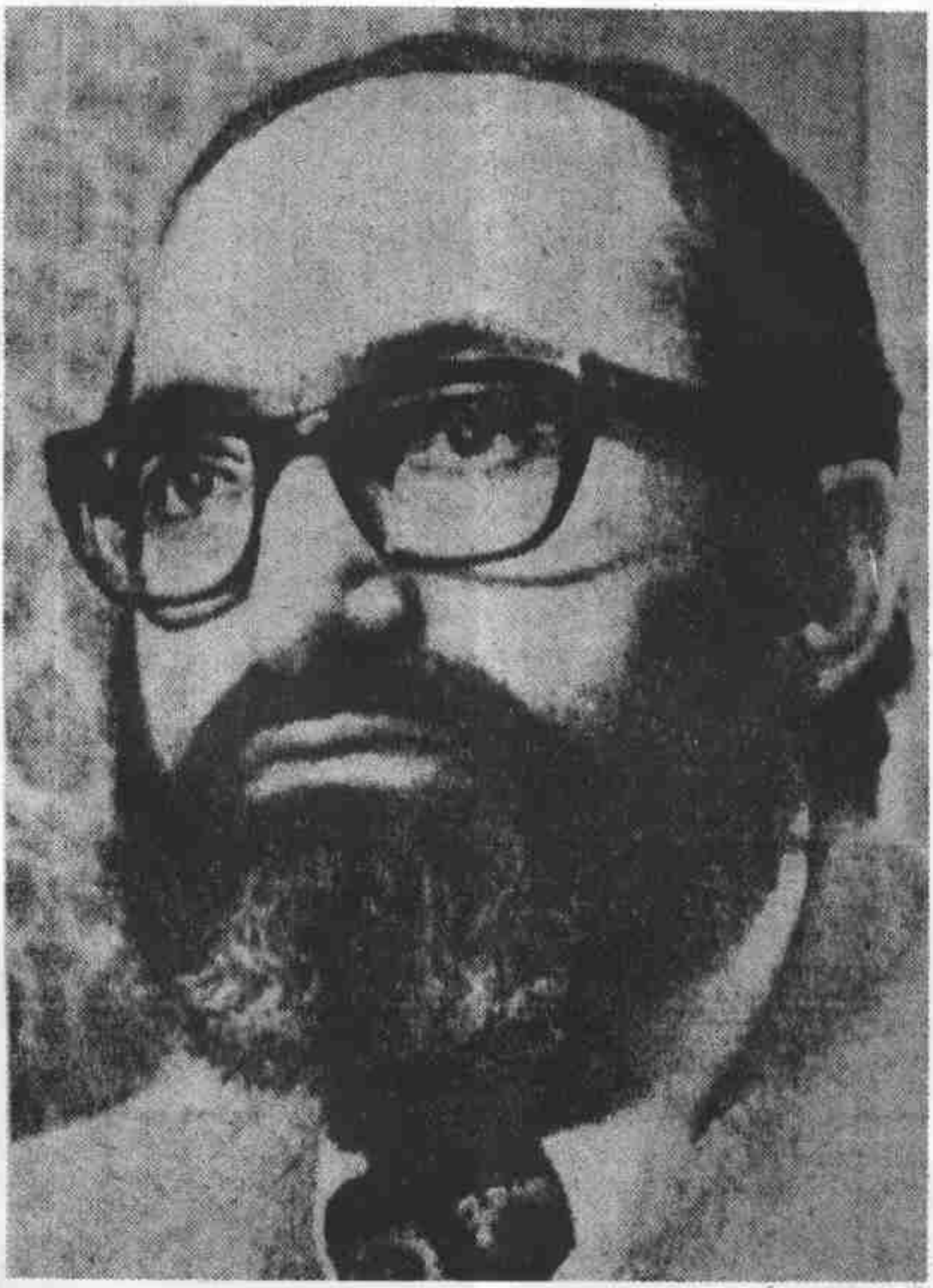

DR. HENRY MORGENTALER: 'I have been getting tremendous support from all over the country.'

A. I wanted to educate the public — that there is a safe method of abortion which is denied to the population. I arranged to have an abortion in my clinic televised on May 13 — to show again that this is a safe, medically-sound procedure, that it can be done without a hospital, that there is no gore involved, that it can be done in conditions of emotional support and human compassion. Most women walk out with a smile and feel relieved, with no anxiety . . . I also wanted to prove to MP's and the medical profession the benefits of the method I pioneered and to a certain extent perfected.

Q. What do you think the next few years hold in store?

A. I am confident that within the next two or three years — I hope sooner — that the abortion law will be repealed, as in the U.S. But it will not be automatic. It is important that people work and fight for it, otherwise it will never come.

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Meetings building Morgentaler defense

by ANN McALLISTER

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the Montreal physician charged with performing illegal abortions, won another skirmish in the courts Nov. 28. Crown Prosecutor Louis Robichaud claimed that Dr. Morgentaler had broken the conditions of his bail by reopening his clinic after his acquittal on the first charge, and that he should be imprisoned pending trial on the remaining 12 charges.

The judge ruled against the Crown, holding that there was no legal reason to stop Dr. Morgentaler from operating his clinic. However, a defense motion to have all bail restrictions, such as the ban on press conferences removed, was denied by the court.

photo by Jeff White

DROP THE CHARGES, FREE MORGENTALER say Toronto demonstrators Oct. 27.

On Dec. 4, the preliminary hearing in the case of Dr. Yvan Macchabee, an associate of Dr. Morgentaler, was postponed until late January, when the Crown's witness could not identify Dr. Macchabee as the man who had performed her abortion.

Committees in defense of Dr. Morgentaler are active in all the major cities of Canada. The recently-completed tour of Anna Cushman, coordinator of the Toronto Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler, served to gear up the committees for the continuation of the campaign.

Cushman reminded audiences in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver that "although the abortion law is federal and we must focus our demands on the government in Ottawa, attacks on women's right to abortion also occur on the local and provincial level. In Alberta there is a private members' bill (Bill 220) which would remove abortion from provincial medicare and Vancouver General Hospital has instituted a six month residency requirement for women needing abortions." In Winnipeg, Brenda Dineen called on the provincial NDP government "to endorse federal NDP policy for abortion law repeal and to implement this policy by establishing abortion clinics throughout the province of Manitoba."

In Toronto on November 28, an audience of more than 500 attended a rally at the St. Lawrence Centre, sponsored by the Toronto Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler and the Toronto Arts Foundation.

The vocal anti-abortion minority of the audience was told by NDP MP Grace MacInnis that "nobody will force an abortion on them and they have no right to force their beliefs on us."

100 persons attended a rally in Ottawa on Saturday, Dec. 8 followed by a march to Parliament Hill. The rally was addressed by many prominent speakers including Brenda Zannis of the Montreal French-speaking Committee to defend Dr. Morgentaler, PC MP Peter Reilly, Irving Greenberg, NDP candidate in Ottawa during the last federal election and Anna Cushman of Toronto. Zannis reported on the events in the courts, the cruel injustice of the abortion law especially in Quebec and the importance of carrying the struggle forward.

Wendy Johnston, coordinator of the Ottawa committee, urged "all those who support Dr. Morgentaler and Dr. Macchabee to build the strongest and broadest possible campaign to get all charges against them dropped."

Cushman outlined the many ways the campaign could be built and carried forward: "Our power is in our numbers. Our power is the power that people have used for centuries — the power of people demonstrating for their rights. Even if parliament is not in session when we get there today, Pierre Trudeau and Justice Minister Otto Lang know we're there!

"The defenders of Drs. Morgentaler and Macchabee have tasted a small bit of the sweetness of victory, but we are not going to stop. We are going to build this campaign until we have won the whole thing — we are not going to stop until all charges against Dr. Morgentaler and Dr. Macchabee have been dropped and abortion has been removed from the Criminal Code."

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Defend Dr. Morgentaler

Build March 9 protest!

by LIS ANGUS

The victimization of Dr. Henry Morgentaler by the Quebec Justice Department continues. On Jan. 29 the Crown will begin proceedings in the Quebec Court of Appeals in an attempt to overturn the recent acquittal of Dr. Morgentaler on the first of thirteen charges under the federal abortion law.

Central to this appeal will be a challenge to the admissability of Article 45 of the Criminal Code — on which Dr. Morgentaler's defense was based — as a legitimate defense in an abortion case.

The acquittal of Dr. Morgentaler last November by a Quebecois jury was a victory for women fighting for their right to abortion in Canada and around the world. It indicated the widespread support which exists for his case, and broad opposition to the restrictive abortion law under which he was charged — the same law which is responsible for the humiliation, despair, mutilation and even death of countless women every year.

The fight has just begun. This appeal by the Crown is only one of a number of indications that the government has no intention of granting women the right to abortion — or of allowing the fundamental challenge to its abortion law, which Dr. Morgentaler's case represents, to stand.

It is now more urgent than ever to mobilize support in defense of Dr. Morgentaler.

Demonstrations across the country on Jan. 26 and 29 protested the Crown's appeal; other meetings, rallies, and debates are planned to publicize the case and build support for it.

A major spring action in the defense campaign has been launched with a call for an Abortion Tribunal to Defend Dr. Morgentaler, to take place in Ottawa on March 9.

This action will bring together supporters of Dr. Morgentaler and of women's right to abortion from across the country to demand that all charges against Morgentaler be dropped and that the abortion law be repealed.

"A Tribunal is one of the most ancient forms of justice, convened by the people to indict those responsible for grave injustices," states the call for the Tribunal, issued by the Toronto Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler.

"Through the testimony of women from all backgrounds and experiences from all parts of the country, and through the testimony of legal and medical experts, the Abortion Tribunal to Defend Dr. Morgentaler will draw together the evidence necessary to indict those responsible for victimizing Dr. Morgentaler and denying women the right to safe, legal abortion.

"The Tribunal, which will be simultaneously translated into English and French, will culminate in a demonstration to Parliament Hill to present our indictments and demands to the self-appointed guardians of women's bodies and lives.

"The Tribunal will dispel the myths surrounding abortion and give voice to the tens of thousands of women who daily suffer under the law which is now publicly victimizing Dr. Morgentaler.

"Never has it been more critical for all those who support and defend a woman's right to control her own body and the dropping of all charges against Dr. Morgentaler, to join together in a united action of people from across the country in Ottawa, where the anti-abortion law was passed and upheld and where, too, it must be repealed."

The call also outlines what is at stake in Dr. Morgentaler's case. "A victory in this case will be a victory for all women who seek control over their reproductive lives. A defeat will mean a continuation of therapeutic abortion committees and their attendant delays, red-tape and discriminatory practices. Most tragically a defeat will mean an increase in the butchery and trauma of back-street abortion, as doctors like Dr. Morgentaler, continue to find their hands tied by an archaic, restrictive law."

The Committee is calling on all supporters of abortion rights to help build this action, to make it an impressive reply to the government's attacks and give voice to the majority of Canadians who support a woman's right to abortion.

The call concludes, "Join us in this dramatic and important event. The Tribunal will strike a powerful blow for justice for the present and future generations of women who want the right to decide when and if to complete a pregnancy and for all those who, like Dr. Henry Morgentaler, want only the freedom to assist women in exercising this basic right."

photo by Grant Hargrave

COMMITTEES TO DEFEND DR. MORGENTALER are planning spring tribunal and demonstration in Ottawa, March 9.

labor Challenge

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Tribunal March 9

GOV'T PRESSES ATTACK ON RIGHT TO ABORTION

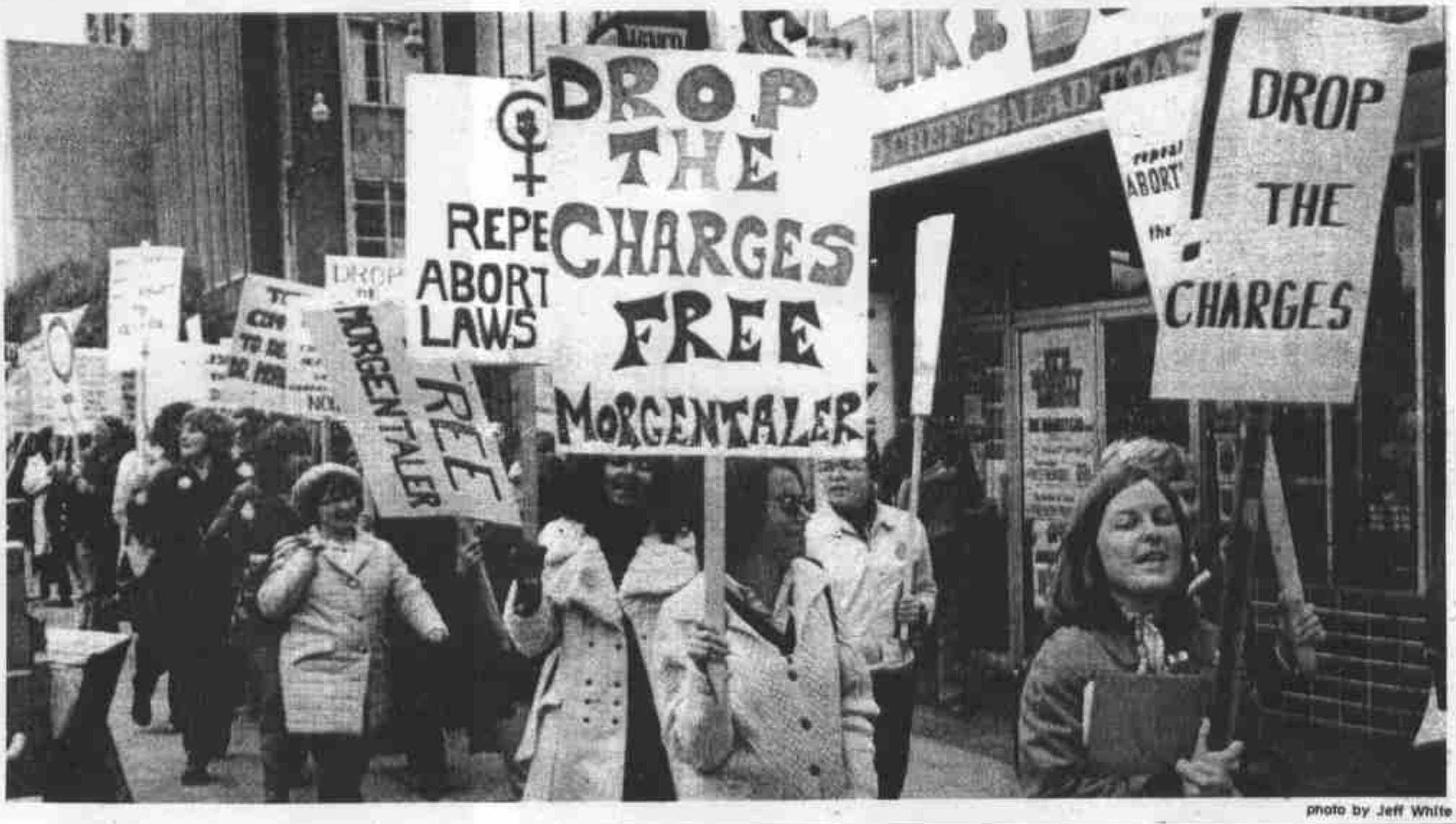

photo by Jeff White

LIS ANGUS

The latest in a series of attacks on supporters of women's right to abortion was the arrest of a respected Montreal gynecologist, Dr. Tanguay, at his office on Thursday, Feb. 21. He was held in jail until the next day, when eight charges of performing illegal abortions, allegedly taking place during the years 1972 to 1974, were laid against him.

Eight woman patients, waiting for routine gynecological examinations, were also taken into custody and later released.

Dr. Tanguay will be arraigned in a Montreal court on Feb. 27, at which time the date for his preliminary hearing will be set.

This arrest followed shortly on the heels of the Feb. 13 police raid on the office and home of Dr. Henry Morgentaler. His private papers were seized and he was told that he owed $350,000 in back income taxes.

Dr. Morgentaler has denied any tax evasion on his part, and points to this charge as part of the continued harrassment of him and some of his colleagues by the Crown in an attempt to silence them and prevent them from assisting women seeking safe abortions.

Dr. Morgentaler was acquitted last November by a Quebec jury on the first of 13 charges against him under the federal abortion law. This acquittal was an important initial victory in the cross-country fight to defend him and win women's right to safe, legal abortion. However, the Crown has filed before the Quebec Court of Appeals in an attempt to overturn this acquittal; the court has not yet ruled on this appeal.

The government also succeeded last week in getting a preferred indictment against Dr. Yvan Macchabee, a colleague of Dr. Morgentaler, on four charges of performing illegal abortions and one charge of resisting arrest. This means that his preliminary hearing will not continue; the case will go directly to

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trial in the Superior Court of Quebec. The trial date has not yet been set.

Dr. Morgentaler's head nurse, Joanne Cornax, was charged on Feb. 4 with conspiracy to perform an illegal abortion in connection with Dr. Macchabee's case. This charge will come up for hearing in April.

These arrests and charges are part of a continuing attack by the Canadian government on women's right to abortion and on the women's movement which is leading the struggle to win this right.

Supporters of women's rights across the country are building a campaign in defense of Dr. Morgentaler and all others victimized under Canada's abortion law. A highlight of this campaign will be the Abortion Tribunal taking place on March 9 in Ottawa at the Ottawa Technical High School, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The tribunal will hear the testimony of women from across the country of their suffering under the inhuman abortion law, as well as testimony by Dr. Morgentaler, Dr. Macchabee and others who have particular experiences in relation to the abortion law.

see page 7 (below)

...New arrests under abortion law

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The Tribunal will indict the Canadian government and its henchmen for maintaining and enforcing this law — a law which is responsible for the agony of countless women and which is now being used to victimize individuals who sought to help women exercise their right to abortion.

NDP M.P. Grace MacInnis will testify on her long struggle in the House of Commons to get the abortion law repealed. She will also introduce the section of testimony by women who have had legal abortions under the present laws, and the difficulties and humiliations they have encountered.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler

Another of the women testifying will be Petra Hart, who was the woman for whom Dr. Morgentaler performed an abortion on the Canada-wide T.V. documentary W5 last May.

An important part of the Tribunal will be testimony by women from Quebec, who suffer most from the inequities of the federal abortion law and who have carried a militant struggle against that law. All the Tribunal proceedings will be simultaneously translated into English and French, to allow all those attending to participate fully.

The Tribunal will culminate in a demonstration through downtown Ottawa to Parliament Hill to present the indictment to those responsible for the crimes against Canadian women which the abortion law perpetuates.

Morgentaler replies to tax charge

The following statement was released by Dr. Henry Morgentaler Feb. 15, following a raid on his Montreal clinic by Quebec tax inspectors two days earlier.

In spite of wide publicity and accusations from official Quebec government quarters that I have been found guilty of tax evasion, I have not to date received an official accusation or judgement. All I did receive was a letter handed to me Feb. 13 at 4:00 p.m., requesting immediate payment of about $350,000 in back taxes, presumably owing. There is apparently a judgement to that effect.

I have never been accused of wrongdoing or notified of any offence. Never have I been able to face my accusers. I have apparently been convicted by arbitrary administrative decision under a Quebec law which seems in clear violation of fundamental principles of justice, civil liberties and human rights in a democratic society. My office and private home have been searched. Private correspondence, diaries and many other papers have been seized. My bank accounts and all assets have been frozen by the Quebec government.

I protest strongly against this continuing persecution. I have not violated any fiscal laws. I do not owe one dollar to the Quebec government and I have always declared my income in full, including income from abortions which the Quebec government has only been too happy to collect while prosecuting me at the same time. My attorneys have been instructed to take every step possible to challenge this violation of justice.

I shall continue to fight for repeal of the unjust and cruel abortion laws in Canada and will moreover continue to provide safe abortions for women in need.

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Abortion tribunal

Gov't guilty of crimes against women

by LINDA MEISSENHEIMER

More than 500 women and men from across Canada and Quebec participated in the Abortion Tribunal to Defend Dr. Morgentaler, held in Ottawa on Mar. 9. After hearing the testimony of women and doctors victimized under the abortion law, the assembly marched to Parliament Hill to present its indictment of the federal government for upholding, defending and enforcing the anti-abortion law. The Tribunal demanded that all charges against Dr. Morgentaler, Dr. MacHabee, Dr. Tanguay and nurse Cornax be dropped, and that the abortion law be repealed from the Criminal Code.

The Tribunal was held on the weekend of International Women's Day (Mar. 8), a time of commemorating women's struggles around the world. One of the largest actions of the Canadian feminist movement to date, it showed the determined response of women to the government's stepped-up attack on the right to abortion, at present centered in Quebec. It brought together activists from all parts of the country who had built the defense campaign for those charged under the abortion law, and many new supporters of the struggle.

Anna Cushman, coordinator of the Toronto Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler, opened the Tribunal with an explanation of its aims, an account of the long struggle waged by Canadian women for abortion law repeal, and the latest government moves against several Montreal doctors and a nurse. Stella Guy, a Montreal birth control and abortion counsellor and activist in the Front Commun pour l'Abrogation des Lois sur l'Avortement, explained the implications of Canada's abortion law.

Testimony was presented by women of different ages, from many parts of the country and very diverse backgrounds. Not a single woman who testified had obtained an abortion without first going through humiliation and degradation. Some went to extraordinary financial expense and risked their very lives trying to carry out their decision.

Women who had sought legal abortions went through tortuous procedures — psychiatrists, lectures on morality, long distance travel to cities with accredited hospitals, or delays necessitating complicated abortion operations.

But it was testimony from women forced to undergo illegal abortions which had the most powerful impact. They described the anguish, fear and danger they experienced in their efforts to get help, and told of incredible tortures inflicted by incompetent quack abortionists.

PRO-ABORTION MARCHERS in Ottawa streets. photo by MacInnis

Their presentations were very moving and very shocking. But perhaps most striking about the Tribunal were the women themselves — severely abused by their experiences, yet powerfully determined to fight until the law is repealed and all women have the right to abortion without the humiliation and danger that they themselves had suffered.

Four doctors presented testimony to the Tribunal. Dr. Sylvia Von Hanna described her own efforts to obtain an abortion years ago when none were legal. In a hard-hitting speech she denied doctors any right whatsoever to decide whether or not women are entitled to abortions.

Her views were echoed by Drs. Morgentaler and MacHabee who testified on their harassment by the Quebec government and police and their legal battles against abortion charges. Their statements met with standing ovations and prolonged applause.

Both doctors, approached by women seeking abortions, had initially respected the law and turned them away. But, they explained, it became impossible to stand by while women risked terrible mutilation from back-street abortionists. They could not withhold their trained services from women in desperate need. They were compelled to defy the law, concluding that the abortion law itself was criminal. They pledged to continue their fight against the law, strengthened above all by the determined campaign of Canadian women.

Madeleine l'Ecyer, one of the chairwomen of the Tribunal, presented the declaration of 385 "accomplices" in Quebec — persons who had defied the law by helping women to obtain abortions.

The Tribunal also heard testimony from Dr. Robert Makaroff who had been convicted and imprisoned several years ago in B.C. for performing abortions illegally. After a vigorous defense campaign organized by the Vancouver Women's Caucus, he was granted a reduced sentence and had his medical license reinstated.

A highlight of the Tribunal was the testimony of Grace MacInnis, NDP MP for Vancouver-Kingsway, who has fought a long and heroic battle in the House of Commons for repeal of the abortion law. "I will say that those forces that prevent the legalization of abortion are guilty of causing the suffering, mutilation and death of so many women because they kept the knowledge and the information about birth control away from them for generations."

Toba Singer of the U.S. Women's National Abortion Action Coalition gave special greetings to the Tribunal. She described the massive women's struggle which forced the U.S. Supreme Court to legalize abortion. Singer pledged the support of WONAAC and expressed confidence that we in Canada would achieve our goals. She ascribed international importance to the Canadian

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government's attacks on doctors and to the cross-Canada defense campaign.

Messages of solidarity were received from Rosemary Brown, NDP MLA in B.C.; the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions; a large number of celebrities in the Quebec Artists' Union; the New York chapter of National Organization of Women; and the Abortion Law Reform Association in England.

Coreen Douglas of the Vancouver defense committee gave the closing speech to the session: "The government is tightening up on abortions across this country, even in B.C. The reactionary anti-abortion crusaders are lining up for battle. But we are building a powerful defense campaign from coast to coast. To make this Tribunal possible, we raised over $10,000. We travelled a total of 130,000 miles to come to Ottawa." In response to her appeal for financial contributions, participants donated over $500.

Finally, the indictment was read and put to a vote. Everyone rose to their feet in unanimous agreement, emphasized by chants and applause. The Tribunal moved outdoors, picked up placards and banners, and marched to Parliament Hill headed by Dr. Morgentaler, Dr. MacHabee and the entire Quebec contingent.

It was a militant action, defying the cold Ottawa weather with rousing chants. The Tribunal arrived at Parliament to find a small delegation of anti-abortion picketers who left shortly afterward. While the rally overflowed the Parliament steps, Brenda Dineen of the Winnipeg defense committee voiced the determination of the participants to build and strengthen the campaign in every part of the country. "This is a tremendous action," she said, "but only the beginning. We know we will eventually be successful — by building the biggest campaign necessary to wipe abortion from the Criminal Code and guarantee every woman the right to safe abortion." The rally was also addressed by Dr. Morgentaler, and speakers from the Ottawa chapter of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Humanist Association, League for Socialist Action, Unitarian Church and Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes.

Tired but very excited by their action, the demonstrators piled into buses headed for Toronto and Montreal, or waited for planes and trains to depart for more distant points.

Sales brisk in Ottawa

Participants in the Abortion Tribunal expressed high interest in socialist literature. Salespersons reported selling 150 copies of **Labor Challenge** and **Young Socialist**, newspapers which have consistently supported the abortion rights struggle. Almost $200 worth of socialist books and pamphelets were sold from literature tables.

Rally indicts government

The following is the indictment adopted by a standing vote of all those present at the March 9 Abortion Tribunal to Defend Dr. Morgentaler.

Through its actions in upholding, defending, and enforcing Canada's federal anti-abortion law, the government of Canada — assisted by provincial and municipal government agencies across the country — is:

— responsible for the psychological and physical suffering, mutilation and deaths of countless women under this law, and is

— responsible for the victimization under this law of those who, like Dr. Morgentaler, assist women in winning and exercising the right to safe abortion.

This Tribunal — convened in Ottawa on March 9, 1974 in the interests of all victims of the anti-abortion law — demands that all charges under the abortion law be dropped, in particular those against Dr. Morgentaler, Dr. MacHabee, Dr. Tanguay, and nurse Joanne Cornax; and that the abortion law itself be repealed from the Criminal Code of Canada.

150 demonstrate in Vancouver

Despite a driving rainstorm, about 150 people marched through downtown Vancouver Mar. 9, demanding repeal of the anti-abortion laws and calling for defense of victims of the law. The demonstration was called by the B.C. Committee to Defend Dr. Morgentaler.

Among the marchers were representatives of a variety of groups, including the University of British Columbia Abortion Action Committee, the Young New Democrats, Vancouver Women's Health Collective, the NDP Women's Rights Committee, the Young Socialists, the League for Socialist Action and the YWCA Women's Information Center.

The march was organized in solidarity with the Ottawa Tribunal, held the same day.